Even Sara

Gladys Blake

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By GLADYS BLAKE

EVEN SARA
THE MYSTERIOUS TUTOR
THE OLD KING'S TREASURE
AT BOW VIEW
THE SCRATCHES ON THE GLASS
DORIS DECIDES
DOÑA ISABELLA'S ADVENTURES
THE POINDEXTER PRIDE

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by

GLADYS BLAKE

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CHAPTER I

GOING TO WASHINGTON

"IT will be vexing to be crowded so," said Grace Moreland in the mild phraseology of the early nineteenth century. Had she been her own great-great-granddaughter, "vexing" would have been much too feeble a word to have described her feelings at the prospect of traveling nine hundred miles sitting three abreast on a carriage seat that was meant for only two.

"Yes, but it can't be helped," her mother briskly rejoined. "We shall just have to make the best of it."

It was very early on an August morning in the year 1823 and a high-swung traveling carriage and three saddle horses stood in front of a pillared plantation house in one of the southern states waiting to take Senator and Mrs. Moreland and their five children on the long trip overland to the capital city of Washington where, in December, Congress would convene. They were starting early that their journey might be leisurely and that they might have time to find comfortable lodgings in the sparsely settled Federal district. They were a large family and they needed plenty of room. It seemed as if they were always outgrowing former accommodations. Their

very traveling carriage had now become too small.

Louise, the second daughter, burst into tears. "You are both blaming me because I won't sit on a horrid little stool at your feet," she complained to her mother and elder sister. "But it's not fair. I'm nearly as tall as Grace is now and I won't sit on a stool on the floor of a carriage ever again. No girl of my age would. Even Sara wouldn't if she were sixteen."

"Well, even Sara would be ashamed to cry about it," her mother rebuked her.

A plain-faced little girl in a narrow gray dress and a leghorn hat tied down like a bonnet came out of the house just in time to hear this exchange of remarks and a faint smile crossed her lips. She often wondered if she had not been taken to the font and solemnly christened by the unique name of Even Sara. Her family nearly always referred to her in that way. They did not mean to be unkind, but Sara was such a quiet, mouse-like little person (small for her fourteen years) and her two older sisters were so vivid and high-spirited, her two brothers so husky and active, her parents so large-bodied and full of life, that somehow one forgot about this shy, unassertive, youngest member of the family or else unconsciously accented her insignificance with the prefix "even." "All of us, even Sara," was the way the family were apt to refer to themselves as a unit and they never seemed to realize that they had used two unnecessary words.

Senator Moreland, coming out of the house be-

hind his youngest child, helped his wife and daughters into the carriage and saw three of them uncomfortably established on the narrow seat with Sara on a hassock at their feet. Then he took from a servant a shabby little doll trunk and a queer, stiff doll and put them both in Sara's lap, warning her to be very careful of the trunk.

"Why, Mr. Moreland," his wife protested in dismay, "even Sara is too old now for dolls. It will look quite ridiculous for her to carry that trunk this year."

"Oh, she's so little she doesn't seem to be more than ten," the gentleman expostulated. "Hold tight to that trunk, Sara, and keep the doll in view in case any one looks in the window," he told his youngest. "I have more money in the trunk than I usually carry along, as well as your mother's jewelry and some very important official papers besides."

"It doesn't seem any time since I was carrying that trunk for father," laughed tall Grace from her corner of the carriage. "Aren't you afraid that highwaymen have caught onto your trick by this time, Papa?" she asked in amusement.

"It's a good scheme," insisted the Senator. "A doll and a doll trunk in the arms of a little girl are the last things likely to arouse suspicion in a 'gentleman of the road' if we are so unlucky as to be held up. Now then, let us be off! The cool of the morning is the best time to travel."

Joe, the negro coachman, cracked his whip over the backs of the four horses that drew the coach,

the Senator and his two sons shook their bridles, and with a now by-gone grandeur the cavalcade set off along the turnpike northward.

Sara looked out of the window and did not join in the conversation going on between her mother and sisters. She held the doll trunk tight and though she was ashamed to be carrying it she was rather proud to be trusted with her father's money and papers. Yet she knew it was because she seemed to him so little and colorless and unlikely to attract attention that he made her the bearer of his money box. He gave her his valuables for the same reason that people hide money in old shoes and other unlikely places when they fear burglars. So it wasn't exactly a compliment and she didn't let herself feel too puffed up about it. And all the time she hoped desperately that no other girls of her age would pass their carriage on the road and see her with that doll and doll trunk. Even Sara had her self-respect to consider though her father didn't seem to realize it.

Presently Ed Moreland rode his horse close to the coach and put his head in at the window.

"One mile gone, only eight hundred and ninety-nine left to travel," he informed his mother and sisters. "We are getting there now!"

"I wish Ed wasn't always trying to be funny," Grace remarked with dignified distaste when her youngest brother had withdrawn his freckled features from view.

"I think it's much nicer to be funny than to be

always solemn like Quentin," Louise promptly retorted.

"Quentin isn't solemn; he's just serious," Grace protested, defending their eldest brother, who usually chummed with her.

"Well, Ed doesn't try to be funny; he just tries to be cheerful," Louise countered, since Ed usually paired off with her.

"Girls, if you begin to bicker this early in the journey, I declare I'll make you both get out of the carriage and walk to Washington," Mrs. Moreland threatened. Nor was she accustomed to making threats which she did not intend to carry out.

So the girls subsided, and for a little while the interior of the vehicle was silent though the boys could be heard talking as they rode past on their horses to get out of the dust from the wheels. What clouds of dust the carriage raised in dry places, how unerringly it found a mud puddle, if there were any, and spattered the mud high, and what a noise it made as it rumbled over the loose planks of the rude bridges which spanned the creeks! But the summer morning was cloudless and cool, the sun very bright, and the cotton fields filled with darkies singing as they worked, while in the woods the birds took up the chorus and wild flowers and ripe fruits filled the air with fragrance. It was the day of days for taking the road.

Senator Moreland was the next one to ride close to the coach windows and speak to the ladies inside.

"I hope we reach Washington before Sister Julia

does," he said to his wife. "She was to sail from some European port, I forget which, at the beginning of July, but I hear there have been bad storms on the Atlantic this summer and she has probably been delayed."

"You surely aren't hoping that poor Aunt Julia has met with storms, are you, Father?" Grace asked demurely.

"No, no, of course I didn't mean that, but it would be gratifying if we could be settled in comfortable lodgings in Washington when she arrives. She has been abroad three years, and I want to give her a warm welcome on her return."

"Welcomes are seldom what one wants them to be in boarding houses," his wife reminded him with a sigh, recalling former winters spent in crowded quarters on Capitol Hill.

"We are not going to stay in that boarding house another season," the Senator asserted in a determined tone. "We are going to rent a house in Washington this year if it has to be—" He paused there and changed the subject without completing what he had started to say. His wife may have guessed, but she said nothing either.

The coach lurched and bumped on its way for endless hours, it seemed, but Sara and her family had never ridden on balloon tires and an asphalt road and lacking these outer virtues they had cultivated the inner ones of patience and endurance instead. The day, which had begun so fair, grew gray in the late afternoon and a sullen rain fell, so that

it was necessary to drop the leather curtains from the top of the carriage to close the open space above the panels of the doors. The Senator and his sons wrapped themselves in their cloaks and let the rain beat upon them, while Sara felt very cozy on her little stool in the bottom of the carriage peering out under the curtains at the legs of the horses, which were all she could see from her low position. When these had grown impossible to discern in the deepening dusk and only the thud of the hoofs told her they were still beside the coach, she knew their party must soon stop for the night at a tavern along the road. They had eaten lunch out of a hamper brought from home—picnicking by a spring in a wayside grove—but that was the last home cooking they were to enjoy. Thereafter they must take pot-luck at the inns wherever they might be, and fortunately in the better taverns they were pretty sure to fare well.

Lights gleamed out on the dark road and a creaking signboard, swinging in the wind, told the weary party that they had reached Granny White's tavern, where a tyrannical old landlady would feed them well and charge them high, according to report. She served three dinners a day, people said, one in the morning, one at midday, and one in the evening, but she never forgot to put every item on the bill. Notwithstanding this, the Moreland party was glad to reach any shelter on such a night and thought that to be overcharged was better than to be underfed.

Sara could hardly stand when she rose at last

from her cramped position on the stool and crept ou
of the carriage ahead of her mother and sisters t
give them room to move. She was thankful it wa
too dark for any one on the porch to see the doll and
trunk she carried, and she kept in the shadows when
they all entered the candlelit hall. When she took
off her wrap in the inn parlor she concealed the doll
under it and left it well hidden while she followed
her mother into the supper room, where at a long
table all the guests of the inn were eating together.
Though she was very sleepy Sara studied all of her
table companions with interest and was particularly
attracted by the strange appearance of two men who
were carrying on a conversation in a foreign lan-
guage at her elbow. They were as odd a looking
pair as Sara had ever seen, one of them being large
and florid and red-headed and the other very short
and wiry and dark. Farther along the table Grace
and Louise were creating much pleasant merriment
by their gay chat, but these two men paid no atten-
tion to the pretty girls. This in itself was enough to
make Sara look at them in surprise, and more espe-
cially on that occasion she noticed them because they
were not talking English. After supper her brother
Quentin told her father in her hearing that he be-
lieved the two foreigners were a Spaniard and a
Russian.

Three bedrooms had been engaged for the More-
lands that night, and as they were typical of the
tavern rooms of that period the sleepy girls could
not go to bed until Hattie, their maid, who had sat

beside Joe on the box, had put their own clean sheets on the high four-poster where Grace and Louise were to sleep and on the trundle-bed which, speaking with license, was to be Sara's resting place. The trundle-bed had been drawn out from under the big bed and was so low it was much like sleeping on a pallet, but Sara was used to it. She had even ceased to be afraid of rats though she knew of more than one small child who had been badly bitten while sleeping in one of those little low beds.

"Dut, dut!" Hattie complained as she waddled from one bedchamber to another, and though her words sounded like "Tut, tut!" her tone could never have been connected with that mild exclamation. "Dut ebberwhar I looks! Dey must er had dogs sleepin' in dese yere rooms befo' we come."

"No, Hattie," Louise yawned, "I saw a sign downstairs saying no dogs are allowed to sleep in the beds at this inn and only five people are ever permitted in one bed."

"Humph!" Hattie grunted contemptuously. She knew that five was the number of fingers she had on one hand and she had her opinion of that many people in a bed.

"I'd rather a nice dog had been sleeping in this bed of ours than five of some of the men I saw downstairs," Grace observed with dainty scorn of her fellow travelers. "Hattie, will you please open this door for me?" she added in polite request. "I want to speak to Mother."

"Hasn't Hattie got enough to do without opening

doors for you?" Louise asked her elder sister with the peevishness that comes from excessive weariness. "Why don't you open the door yourself?"

"Because turning knobs spreads the hand and no lady of quality should do it," Grace loftily explained. "You had better be giving as much attention to preserving your looks, Louise," she added earnestly. "You ate butter to-night, which no young female as plump as you are should ever do, and you rode all day to-day without gloves and sometimes with your hat off. If you do that again you'll be as brown as Hattie when we get to Washington and then what sort of appearance will you make at the balls this winter?"

"Gloves are so hot," Louise pouted.

"Well, what if they are? They keep your hands and arms white. And a deep bonnet is a necessity when traveling to preserve the purity of the complexion. Even Sara ought to wear them," she added, with a distressed glance at her youngest sister, who, however, looked too brown and freckled now to ever grow white again. This was one of the results of her family's neglect. Had her mother and sisters paid more attention to her she would never have been allowed such close contact with the sunshine. She would have been kept white and fair in bonnets and gloves and under parasols.

"To-morrow, Sara, you must protect your skin," Grace told her firmly. "I will lend you a pair of my gloves."

"Thank you," said Sara politely, but hoped Grace

would forget it before morning. There had been times before when Grace had been roused to do her duty toward her youngest sister and had then happily forgotten.

As nobody slept much that night morning was welcome. Mosquitoes and fleas joined their forces to make the guests of the inn as miserable as possible, and Sara was only just dozing away toward daybreak when she heard the stagecoach starting off at the distressingly early hour—was it four or three? —that stages usually took the road in those days. This woke her up again so thoroughly that she spent the rest of the time until the sun rose sitting bolt upright in her low bed looking out the window at the road they had followed the day before, which was called the "Granny White Pike" because of the old woman's famous tavern. When it was light she got up and dressed herself.

There were numbers of others astir in the house when she descended to the inn parlor. Because once more the sun was shining brightly all the windows and doors were open which had been closed during the storm the previous night, and while the little girl was wandering about in the parlor, listening to the roar of the ocean within the pink hearts of the big shells on the whatnot, she was able to see and hear all that passed on the front porch, where several of the other guests were gathered.

The center of this gathering on the porch were the two foreigners who had sat beside Sara at supper the night before, but they were no longer conversing

with each other in a foreign tongue. The big man sat silent, but the little dark man was talking animatedly in good English with the lean native travelers who sat around in their shirt sleeves with their feet on the porch railing, waiting for breakfast. What they were talking about was a political matter of much interest that summer, the state of things in South and Central America.

Being the daughter of a Senator Sara knew something about this subject. She knew that the South American countries had recently won their independence from Europe, just as the United States had done not so many years ago, and had set up governments patterned on that of the great North American republic. The United States had recognized these governments and sympathized with their desire to stay independent. But they were weak and of course their former possessors wanted to have them for colonies again. And what this little dark foreign man was asking people was this: Were they sufficiently interested in South American affairs to desire to help those new republics maintain their freedom? Would they care one way or another what happened in South America? Wasn't the place too far away to concern them?

"Why do you ask us that, stranger?" one man demanded curiously. "This is the third time this week that I've come across you at one tavern or another asking these same questions. What is it to you what we think?"

The foreigner (a Spaniard if Quentin had guessed

right) looked a bit disconcerted for a moment on learning that he had run against the same man three times in a week, but he soon recovered his self-possession.

"I am desirous of learning the temper of the average North American man on the subject of South American affairs," he explained with disarming frankness. "My friend and I are earnest students of world politics, and we find we can feel a nation's pulse better in taverns and on the road than in halls of state. I don't deny we are both much interested in North America's attitude toward South America."

"Well, I reckon we've got too many troubles of our own to bother about what happens so far off," another guest drawled lazily. "Anyhow, *I* have this morning!"

"Just what I should imagine!" exclaimed the little dark foreigner vigorously. "And right you are, too! You've won a glorious independence from England, but it isn't your business to lend a hand to other countries who also desire independence. Each nation for itself alone is the wisest policy."

Sara could have answered him back about that, for she had heard her father say that everything that happened on the two American continents was apt to concern the United States in some way and that large nations should help weaker ones, but it would have astonished all those men very much indeed if a little girl had stepped through the window and begun talking politics. No little girls, or big ones either, were supposed to understand affairs of state

in those days but were to be interested only in household matters and music and drawing. Sara had had her fair share of training in housekeeping and was sure she had worked as many "samplers" as anybody to show how many different stitches she knew, but she often listened attentively to conversations at her father's table about world events. She was just as interested in the world she lived in as in the house she lived in. For didn't everything that happened in the world at large affect the household in the end? Just as a sand storm outdoors would make it hard to breathe inside.

She was turning away from the parlor window when she heard something else said outside that attracted her attention.

"Who was the tall man who came last night with his wife and a bevy of boys and girls?" the Spaniard was asking Granny White, the landlady, who had come out on the porch to call them to breakfast.

" 'Twas our United States Senator Moreland and his family," Granny answered, taking her corncob pipe from her mouth. "They are all on their way to Washington."

Sara heard no more, but she noticed that the Spaniard and his big red-headed companion regarded her father with interest at the breakfast table though they made no effort to draw him into a conversation.

CHAPTER II

THE HOLDUP

BREAKFAST was hot and bounteous, and the travelers lingered over it longer than they intended. Ed was responsible for the disappearance of two crisply fried chicken drumsticks, two wings, a back and a breast, from the high-piled platters that were passed around and around the long table at which everybody sat; Grace forgot her complexion long enough to eat several hot biscuits with thick white gravy; Louise was careful not to eat butter but spread her hot cakes with a heavy golden brown syrup instead; and even Sara was allowed a cup of good black coffee with rich cream and lots of sugar to drink with her meal.

When they rose from the table at last, there was a great hurry and scurry to get off as if everybody were trying to overtake the wasted time. The Morelands had set down their hand luggage in the parlor of the inn while the bill was being paid, and Sara had covered her doll and its trunk with a shawl because there were men and boys in the room who might laugh at them. However, she was sitting close beside her trust, and there was no reason for her father to become so concerned when he did not see the trunk immediately.

"Sara, where's your doll and doll trunk?" the Senator demanded in consternation as he looked over the baggage. "They are not here. Where did you have them last? I must make inquiries—"

"Here they are, Father," Sara hastened to assure him, blushing furiously because of the attention his words drew upon her. The laugh she had expected became a loud guffaw as she lifted the shawl. Her obvious embarrassment amused the men even more than the doll.

The Senator's face cleared. He did not realize that his consternation over a supposedly lost doll trunk had been a bit queer. One man in the room had not laughed aloud, but a derisive smile had touched his lips. He flicked the ashes from the end of a big Spanish cigar he had been smoking and moved idly to a window, from which he could watch the Morelands getting into their carriage. Noticing the care that every one of them took of the doll trunk, his inward mirth became almost ribald. He thought the family were amazingly poor actors and hadn't a doubt that jewelry and money were in the trunk. Then he saw something that caused him to become alert and interested. He saw the Senator stand talking with a constituent he had met at the inn, saw a paper pass between the two men, watched the Senator glance over it, nod and—it amused the watcher anew in spite of his intense interest!—hand the folded paper through the window of the carriage to the little girl who held the doll trunk. The inference was obvious. Some one had presented the

Senator with a petition of some sort and he wanted to put it with his other official papers which—the watcher had no doubt—were in that doll trunk the little girl so hated to carry. It had not occurred to the man at first that the trunk might contain papers, but now he was sure of it. He stood for a long while looking from the window of the inn with narrowed eyes and did not turn away until after the Moreland cavalcade had disappeared in a cloud of dust up the pike.

Another long day's travel had begun, and Sara felt sore in all of her muscles from yesterday's bumps and bruises and even sorer in spirit because of that laugh over her doll at the inn. She would have liked to have told those men and boys that the doll was only carried along because of the trunk, and that it was really her father's doll, but of course she couldn't do that and so she had been forced to swallow her pride and let people suppose she still played with dolls at her age. Only another girl can understand how bad she felt about it.

But as the drive progressed she began to get over her ill humor and to enjoy the pleasant day. They came to a tollgate and Senator Moreland rode up to pay the toll with great quarter-dollars larger than our half-dollars are now, and to the tollgate keeper's numerous little towheads, who all stood around with their fingers in their mouths, he gave big coppers on each of which was inscribed one-hundredth of a dollar instead of one cent. These very little girls looked with real envy at the doll, and so Sara didn't

object to their seeing it. She even opened the trunk and took out a tiny hat which, with a few quaint little clothes, covered the valuables inside, tying it over the doll's head while the little girls watched her wide-eyed. But her father warned her to be very careful when she did anything like that. It was decidedly risky.

"Where do we stop to-night, Mr. Moreland?" the Senator's wife asked him as they started on their way again. "Near or far?"

"I hope to reach the home of our friend, Dr. Stearns, instead of spending a second night in succession on the wretched beds of a tavern," he informed her. "But White Hill plantation is a good many miles away, and we shall have to travel fast or be out on the road very late."

The prospect of being out after nightfall was disturbing. Night travelers were always in danger of being held up by highwaymen. Quentin and Ed, riding on either side of the carriage after their father had gone on ahead, discussed the possibility with their mother and sisters inside.

"A stagecoach was held up on this road just a few nights ago," Ed announced. "A fellow at the inn was talking about it."

"There is no safer time to travel a road than soon after a holdup," his mother said, a bit sharply, as a rebuke to her addle-pated son for alarming his sisters. "The bandits keep away from the scene of a former crime because they know travelers will be more alert. I don't anticipate any trouble at all."

"If we should be held up," said sober Quentin, who liked to moralize, "it would be a splendid test for our characters. We would find out whether we are brave and strong or weak and cowardly. Such a self-revelation would do us good."

"That is true," Grace agreed, equally serious.

"I think I might be brave if I could just be sure the highwaymen wouldn't hurt us in any way," Louise remarked thoughtfully, "and that they would let us continue our journey in just a few minutes and wouldn't take our horses away from us or much of our money or my turquoise necklace."

"But courage on those terms wouldn't amount to much, Louise," her brother pointed out. "It would be a fake holdup."

"Indeed, I think it would take a deal of courage to be cool even then," Louise insisted.

While the sun shone warm and bright and they continually passed other travelers on the road, Sara did not worry at all about highwaymen. She hardly listened to the others as they discussed the matter. But when the day began to wane and the shadows grew long in the meadows and every woodland had changed from green to uniform gray and was filled with mysterious crackling noises, she felt an uncomfortable creeping sensation up and down her spine. Of course, her father and Quentin were armed and possibly Ed and the coachman also, but it was not reassuring to picture shots flying around. She began to wish heartily that they had stopped for the night at an inn they had just passed, where

they would have been safe from night prowlers, but by pressing on toward his friend's home the Senator had left that refuge behind. And before them now lay the deepest wood they had yet encountered on the journey. Though it was not yet sunset the dense forest was sure to be almost dark, and Sara was certain she would not draw an easy breath until they were out of it.

The wheels of the carriage began to roll softly over pine needles and fallen leaves. They were entering the outskirts of the big forest. The long rays of the afternoon sun cut through the trees at intervals and dappled the road, but each turn of the wheels drew the carriage farther into what looked from a distance like a tunnel and which lightened only a very little when they were inside. Senator Moreland and his sons drew closer to the carriage and each rode with one hand on the butt of his pistol and cast keen glances all around. No one in the party would have admitted being afraid but all of them felt uncomfortable. That is, just at first! As the road wound on and on through the woodland and nothing unpleasant occurred, its gloomy fastness became familiar and it no longer aroused creepy feelings in even Sara.

"I'm thirsty," said Grace when they were midway of the wood. "Couldn't we stop for a drink at the next spring, Mother?"

Mrs. Moreland repeated the question to her husband.

"Ed shall bring Grace a drink to the carriage,"

he agreed. "It would not be wise to make a halt here at this hour. We must take no greater risks than we can avoid."

So when another spring was found trickling down the wall of a low cliff, Ed dismounted from his horse, took the little wooden water bucket they carried in the carriage, and climbed up the rocks to fill it. As he was coming down again, he found himself facing a very big man with a black mask over his features and a singularly unpleasant looking pistol in his hand, the mouth of which was about a foot from the region which Ed vaguely knew was his heart. The man said gruffly, but in a low tone, "Stop, boy!" and Ed stopped.

"Stand still and you will not be hurt; run and I shoot you dead," the assailant went on.

"You've got the advantage of me," Ed agreed, "but what's the idea? Here's a bucket of water if you want a drink. It's all I've got to give you."

The man spoke again, slowly, as if having trouble with his pronunciation.

"You are—what you call—a hostage, yes?" he explained. "Put down that pail and hold up your hands. If your party makes no trouble for my companion you go free without a scratch; if they fire on him I shoot you. You understand?"

Ed understood and let his bucket fall to the ground while his hands went up. Thus he waited as a guarantee of his father's and brother's docile behavior.

The companion of whom the big man had spoken

was small and wiry. He, too, was masked but he seemed to have no weapon as he stepped from behind a clump of trees and boldly approached the coach and the two mounted men beside it. To the Senator and Quentin he bowed ironically; to Mrs. Moreland and the girls he bent low with real courtesy and took off his hat. Seeing Senator Moreland and his eldest son both draw their pistols, he made a gesture of warning.

"Your youngest son, Senator, is facing the pistol of my accomplice up yonder on the rocks," he explained, pointing to the tableau. "His safety is the price of mine. Shoot me and immediately he lies dead; give me what I want and all of you may continue on your way uninjured. Do you value your son's life above your money box or am I mistaken in my judgment?"

"You are not mistaken," the Senator said. "Joe," to the coachman, "give this man my money box. And, Quentin, empty your pockets as I do mine. My dears," to his wife and daughters who were looking from the carriage windows with white faces, "take off your rings and any other trinkets you have upon you and throw them out here."

Joe handed down a small box he had guarded beneath his seat under the impression that it contained his master's funds, Quentin willingly produced his purse, and Mrs. Moreland and the girls handed out a few modest ornaments. But the highwayman smiled and waved away these tributes.

"I want only one thing," he politely assured the

party, "and that is the doll trunk in the arms of the small maiden who sits so demurely on the floor of the carriage. And to cancel an evil deed by a good one I will take the doll, too, because I believe she is a little too old to enjoy carrying it."

Sara wondered why she felt like laughing. It certainly wasn't amusing to be held up and robbed like this. Yet it seemed funny that the man had guessed about the trunk, and when he said he would relieve her of the doll because he could see she didn't like to carry it she nearly laughed outright. Her father called to her to give up what was asked for, and so there was nothing to do but hand them through the window to the masked man. He came close to the window to receive them and while Grace and Louise cowered a little and Mrs. Moreland faced him with a steady glance, he examined both the trunk and the interior of the carriage as if to make sure Sara had not removed anything.

"No, I didn't take anything out," Sara reassured him, guessing his suspicion. "I didn't think about it in time."

At that he met her eyes, and she saw that her answer amused him. But more than that, she saw something familiar about the man in spite of his mask. Somewhere she had seen this highwayman before, and very recently, too. As he drew away, carrying both doll and trunk, she had a clear view of Ed up on the rocks with his hands over his head and a very big man holding a pistol on him. And then Sara knew where she had seen both men before.

She was almost sure they were the Spaniard and the Russian who had sat beside her at the table the night before and who had talked politics on the porch of the inn that morning. Her discovery excited her very much, but she held her tongue and did not let the man beside the carriage guess that she recognized him.

"Now, Senator, your cavalcade may move on," the smaller highwayman announced. "When you are a reasonable distance away, your son will be sent straight after you on his horse. He will overtake you in half a mile, safe and uninjured."

"If he doesn't," swore the Senator, "you and your precious accomplice shall hang from the trees of this forest before another dawn has passed. I will bring a posse from the next village and run you down with dogs."

The Senator was feeling conscious of the poor showing he had made so far.

"Do not get excited," the highwayman advised. "For a man of your large build, Senator, excitement might have serious consequences. Assuredly your son shall follow you. *Adios!*"

He stood back and the carriage rolled slowly forward while the Senator and Quentin waited until it was in motion and then closed in and rode behind it. The Senator called out a comforting word to Ed, who gamely waved his hands which were still pointing skyward with every finger. The horsemen and the carriage occupants all rode looking behind them until presently hoofbeats sounded and Ed came gal-

loping up with a broad and happy grin on his face. What a tale he would have to tell in Washington!

Sara's arms felt empty without the doll and the trunk. Indeed, now that the old doll she had carried on so many trips was gone, she realized that she missed it very much. And she knew her father had lost a round sum of money by the theft of the trunk as well as many official papers and some jewelry belonging to her mother and sisters. But as she thought it over Sara wondered why the highwayman had refused the money her father and Quentin had produced from their pockets and the brooch and earrings her mother had been wearing? Was it because he did not want to deprive them of everything they had, or did he want something besides money and jewelry? She remembered his last word *"Adios!"* and she knew that was a Spanish farewell. It seemed to confirm her suspicion that the man was the Spaniard who had talked politics at the inn that morning. And a foreigner who questioned people about their political opinions on the porch of a tavern and some hours later robbed a United States Senator of his official papers might not be an ordinary highwayman. She decided that she had better tell her father about that as soon as possible. It might mean something serious.

But the chance to talk with her father did not come at once. He rode ahead of the carriage while the boys protected the rear, and all the horses were urged to a swift pace. They were soon out of the dark forest and had reached a point where the road

ran across meadows in the crimson light of sunset. Before many stars were out they had reached White Hill plantation and been warmly welcomed by their friends.

It was not until after supper that Sara found her father alone. He had been talking with the sheriff of the county and had offered a reward for the apprehension of the two highwaymen and for the return of the papers and other valuables that had been stolen. As the sheriff was leaving Sara sidled up to the Senator.

"Father, I've got something to tell you," she said hurriedly. "I believe those men who held us up this afternoon were at Granny White's tavern last night. I seemed to recognize them as those two foreigners whom Quentin guessed to be a Spaniard and a Russian. And this morning I heard them talking politics with some other men on the front porch. They were talking about South American affairs."

"Yes, yes, honey; very likely," the Senator answered absently, not having listened to a word. "Run away now; Father's worried and busy. It certainly wasn't your fault that the trunk was lost. You did right to hand it to the man when I told you to. Don't think about it any more."

He walked away and Sara felt that funny, disconcerted way everybody feels when something we think will cause tremendous excitement falls quite flat. She supposed that her father had heard what she told him but simply wasn't interested. Feeling

very small and meek, she stole away by herself and told nobody else of her suspicions.

Later in the evening the Senator was in a more resigned state of mind concerning his loss and could talk about other aspects of the holdup. He said the man who robbed him had certainly behaved more like a highwayman in a play than the actual sort, refusing everything except the doll trunk.

"He must have had an exaggerated idea of what the trunk contained," Mrs. Moreland suggested. "Perhaps he thought you were transporting government funds."

"Were your papers very valuable, Senator?" asked Dr. Stearns.

"Well, yes—and no. It will be inconvenient to replace them, but I don't believe they will reveal anything of importance to an enemy of our government if that's what you mean."

Just before the inmates of the house went upstairs to bed the door-knocker sounded. A negro boy stood outside with the lost doll trunk in his hands which he said had been given him by a masked man to return to Senator Moreland.

"Eh!" ejaculated the Senator, unbelieving.

"Yessuh! He said he hoped you wouldn't find nuthin' missin', Marster," the boy, who was a slave of Dr. Stearns, explained.

A quick search of the trunk proved that indeed nothing was missing. Every dollar of money, every jewel and trinket, every paper was there. On a white card attached to the trunk were carefully

printed these words: "Just a practical joke, Senator, to teach you not to carry valuables in a doll trunk."

"A practical joke!" the Senator repeated grimly when he had read the statement aloud. "But I notice that all the seals on my papers have been broken. The jesters seem to have had curiosity as well as humor."

CHAPTER III

THE MORELANDS RENT A HAUNTED HOUSE

DURING the days that followed the Morelands journeyed leisurely on their way. Sometimes they lingered several days in a city to rest the horses and themselves and to seek diversion. That was the advantage of allowing plenty of time for the trip instead of being in a hurry. They saw the country as only leisurely travelers do. Autumn advanced as they moved farther north. September gave them hot days and cool nights. The great yellow harvest moon would have made evening travel possible if the danger of another holdup by highwaymen had not made it inadvisable. As it was, Sara and her sisters often watched the moon roll up over wooded hills from the pillared porch or open casement of roadside inns where they had stopped for the night. On such evenings they would walk in the woods and fields with their brothers to get the exercise which carriage travel denied them.

The summer green of the trees was beginning to fade in the higher mountainous districts through which their road led them, and though no frost had fallen, yet the sumachs, the maples, and the dogwoods were turning crimson or yellow and the dark red of the woodbine trailed along low stone walls

that bordered some estate. There was a rustle of fallen leaves as the horses trotted through the woods, and rabbits and foxes and impudent squirrels darted into the underbrush before their advance. The carriage was ferried over rivers and creeks which proved too deep to ford or crossed precarious bridges which the travelers sometimes had to repair themselves after a stormy night. There were a hundred little adventures along the way and minor accidents and vexations in number, but nothing memorable occurred except that once more their path crossed that of the two foreigners of whom Sara had such deep suspicions. They also seemed to be traveling leisurely toward Washington. Unfortunately Sara had only a glimpse of them during this last encounter. They both kept to their room in the inn where the two parties happened to be staying at the same time and did not appear at the common table until after the Morelands had left.

Then on a day in late September the Moreland family crossed the Potomac and passed out of the state of Virginia into the Federal District of Columbia and the capital of the nation. The long trip by carriage was at an end, but they would not have effaced a single one of those early autumn days from their memory and the younger members of the party, in particular, would have been glad to live the journey over again.

Sara had been to Washington several times in her fourteen years but this time she was at an age when she could better understand and enjoy the new scenes

through which she traveled and gain a clearer impression of the people she met. In a way it was as if she were coming to Washington for the first time. She was sure she had never before appreciated that first view of the city which they all received suddenly when the carriage topped a hill some miles away, and Washington and Georgetown were spread out before them. The travelers had halted there a while to enjoy the view before they rode down the hill and through Georgetown which, connected with Washington by a small bridge, was considered part of the city. They had made a detour because of bad roads and so they rolled or cantered down the mile-long main street of the older town before entering the great sprawling city of Washington itself, where crowded boarding houses were the best lodgings most of the Congressmen and their families could find. To one of these the Morelands repaired temporarily, but the Senator had made up his mind against staying there long. He wanted a house, and he meant to find one.

"We are not the only official folk to arrive early," Grace said on their first morning in Washington. "Congressman Fulton and his family are here, too. I met Mrs. Fulton in the hall a moment ago. She said that she and Marybelle had ridden horseback with Mr. Fulton for five hundred miles and spent many nights in Indian villages. If that were the only way I could have gotten to Washington, I would have stayed at home."

At the mention of Marybelle Fulton, Sara had

rolled up the sewing her mother had given her to do that morning and putting it in her workbasket had hurried away with it on her arm, down a long bare corridor and up a flight of stairs, and knocked on a door in the farthest part of the big boarding house. At the invitation to enter she walked in on a girl near her own age who sat doing beadwork in a sunny corner of the room. She looked up as Sara opened the door.

"Well, if it isn't Even Sara!" cried Marybelle Fulton, that having been a joke between them, two years before when they first met in Washington.

"Even so," said Sara.

Then Marybelle sprang up and sent her beads flying as she ran to hug her chum. The two girls were not a bit alike, which was perhaps the reason they had been attracted to each other.

"Did you ride horseback to Washington and stay nights in Indian villages?" Sara asked in an awed tone as they sat together on the sofa and each resumed her work.

"To be sure I did. Where I live the roads are too bad for carriages and inns simply don't exist. But Mother and I were determined to come with Papa. We enjoyed the trip, too, and an Indian squaw taught me how to do this beadwork. But tell me about yourself, Miss Even Sara, and what you've been doing. By the way, do your folks still call you that?"

"They always will," said Sara. "But I suppose I

ought to be glad they don't forget my name entirely."

"Well, if I was in your place I'd find some way to make them take notice of me if I couldn't think of anything better than a toothache. Don't you ever have a toothache and make an awful fuss?"

"I've had toothache, but I've never made a fuss about it," said Sara virtuously.

"That's your mistake, my dear," Marybelle pointed out. "If you'd cut up dreadfully and had everybody in your family waiting on you, then you wouldn't seem so unimportant any more. Quakerish little girls like you who hardly ever talk and go off in a corner and suffer and never say anything about it may get a reward in another world, but they won't in this. You have to bring your own self to the front if you don't want your folks to forget you. If I had a hundred sisters and brothers I wouldn't let myself get lost among them. Nobody should ever say Even Marybelle as if I were a synonym for insignificance."

Sara chuckled. She was sure this was true.

"You," the loquacious Marybelle went on airily, "are like cool water, Sara, while your sisters are like tea and coffee and lemonade."

"You mean I'm flavorless?" Sara asked ruefully.

"No, I don't mean that at all. But your sisters sort of keep themselves on the buffet in silver pitchers while you stay on the back porch in a wooden bucket. If you just poured yourself into a pitcher and sat where company could find you, there are a

lot of people who would prefer good water to any fancy drink."

By this time both the girls were laughing very much and Sara changed the subject hastily for fear Marybelle would try to teach her an Indian war whoop with which to force her family and their friends to sit up and take notice of her.

"I do wish we were going to live in the same house again this year," Sara said, sighing regretfully that it couldn't be so. "We could have such fun together."

"But aren't we?" Marybelle asked in surprise. "Isn't your family going to stay here?"

"No, Father's going to rent a house, he says. We want lots of room. You see, my Aunt Julia, who has been abroad three years, is on her way home and will live with us in Washington this winter. And we are such a big family besides."

"But what house is your father going to rent, I should like to know?" was the incredulous inquiry. "Is he going away out in Georgetown?"

"No, he says Georgetown is too far from the Capitol."

"Then *what* house? There isn't any house that's vacant. Oh, Sara! I know! He's going to rent the old Burton place!"

Sara gasped. She hadn't thought of that.

"The haunted house, you mean? Oh, no, I'm sure Father isn't thinking of taking that."

"Well, I'll wager just anything he is. I remember the last time you were all in Washington your father

said to my father that if the session wasn't nearly over he'd rent the Burton place and move his family out there because the noise was so bad here."

"I think I'll go back to our rooms and ask Mother," Sara said, jumping up from the sofa. "But, Marybelle, supposing Father *is* going to rent the Burton house, do you—do you think it's really haunted?"

"Nobody has been able to stay there in all the fourteen years since Major Burton died and his widow took their child and went abroad to live," Marybelle reminded her younger friend. "People who have rented it because of the house shortage in Washington have always left in a hurry and gone back to living in uncomfortable lodgings instead. Yet it's a beautiful home, and there would have been numbers trying to buy it if the place didn't have a ghost."

Sara returned to her own end of the boarding house to learn if Marybelle's guess could possibly be true. When she entered her mother's room she found her sisters and brothers there, and just as she came in the door she heard her mother saying:

"I have something to tell you, children, which may prove a little disturbing, but I am depending on you to take it like the sensible boys and girls you are. Your father has gone to see the agent of the Burton house this morning, and if it isn't already rented he is going to lease it for the winter. Now how are you all going to behave?"

There were startled exclamations from Grace and

Louise and the two boys. To Sara it was not so startling, Marybelle having prepared her for it, but this confirmation of her fears was unpleasant enough. Like the others she was almost petrified by the information that her father had gone out that very morning to rent the famous haunted house of Washington.

"Of course, there is no ghost," Mrs. Moreland went on in a brisk, sensible manner. "People have just imagined one."

"There must be *something,* Mother," Grace protested. "A lovely home like that one isn't left vacant without a real cause in a city where lodgings are always in demand."

"A ghost would be a very unreal cause, Grace," Quentin put in laughingly.

"I wouldn't be afraid—not very, that is—if the place had any neighbors," Louise stated nervously. "But it's such an isolated house with lonesome commons all around it."

"We don't need neighbors when we have such a large family and two servants," her mother reminded her. "Your father and Quentin and Ed and Joe make four men in the house."

"That's the first time you ever admitted I'm a man, Mother," said seventeen-year-old Ed with a grin.

"Well, I do admit it now, and I expect you to conduct yourself like one. I expect all of you to act like grown-up people, even Sara. If we can get that nice house, we will move in at once so that we will

be settled when your Aunt Julia arrives. It's simply ridiculous that a fine residence like the Burton place, furnished throughout, should be left vacant, except for short periods, for fourteen years just because a strange shadow glides through it occasionally. If the shadow is a disembodied spirit, it has never harmed any one yet and I'm not afraid it will hurt us."

"What sort of people were the Burtons, Mother?" Grace asked thoughtfully. "And how did Major Burton die?"

"They were people of the highest standing," Mrs. Moreland assured her daughter, "and Major Burton died a sudden but natural death. Your father can tell you a great deal more about them than I can as he was a great friend of the Major's, though he always said he didn't care much for his wife, who was a very haughty sort of woman and acted as if she were superior to everybody in Washington. Washington society was relieved when she went abroad to live after her husband's death."

When the Senator rejoined his family at the dinner hour, he told them that he had taken a lease on the Burton house for the winter and that they could move in right away as the agent had kept the place in good condition inside and out. His family did not disappoint him but accepted the fact in a sensible manner. The only trouble he had was with Hattie and Joe, who were thoroughly terrified at the prospect of living with a ghost. But their master scoffed at their fears and their mistress pleaded with them,

and at last they were persuaded to go with broom and mop to make ready for the family. Two days later the Morelands moved into the famous haunted house and made themselves at home.

Marybelle came around to help Sara fix up her room, for Mrs. Moreland had given Sara a nice little room to herself in the upstairs back hall. There were so many rooms in the house that after every member of the family had what he or she wanted and a room had been set aside for Miss Julia, there was still one left vacant which the Senator thought he would probably rent to some one soon.

"Won't you be afraid to sleep by yourself in a haunted house?" Marybelle asked her chum with a wicked twinkle in her eyes. She asked it just as the dusk was stealing through the big house and candles were gleaming here and there as Hattie set them out with a trembling hand. Suddenly from the attic over their heads came a crash and a slight scream, followed by hasty footsteps on the attic stairs. The girls ran out in the hall and met Mrs. Moreland.

"Was that you in the attic, Mother?" Sara asked. "What happened?"

"I dropped my lantern," her mother answered, a little breathlessly. "Sara, give me another light quick. I saw something odd in the attic and I'm going right back and investigate it."

"You mean you saw the *ghost,* Mother?" Sara questioned aghast.

"There is no such thing as a ghost, Sara, but I saw something resembling a ghost—the form of a man in a Continental uniform flitting across a wall with a queer light all around him. Give me a candle and call your father."

Sara called her father before she gave her intrepid mother a candle, and her parents went upstairs together to look for the ghost. But they found nothing and came down laughing. The Senator was sure his wife had imagined the vision that had disturbed her, and she was willing to agree and to make light of it to the children. They all had a merry supper to lift their spirits, and Marybelle stayed all night with Sara. Sleep visited every pillow, and the morning sun found all of them fearless and cheerful. No one saw any more visions and after another night or two they stopped looking for them. It was fun for the young people to live in the famous haunted house because all their friends in the city regarded them with awe and respect.

"Yes, we are spending the winter in the Burton house," Grace and Louise would tell the other young ladies of Washington in a careless tone. "Have we seen the ghost? Oh, only once!"

It was worth a lot of shivers in the night to be able to talk like that.

Two weeks after the Moreland family moved into the Burton house Miss Julia Moreland, the Senator's sister, returned from her long stay abroad. She was welcomed joyously by her nieces and nephews, with whom she was a great favorite.

CHAPTER IV

ONE RAINY AFTERNOON

ON rainy days in Washington in 1823 people stayed at home. The roads were so bad and the distance between houses so great that few cared to go out unless they must. So at last the young Morelands had their Aunt Julia to themselves. No company would come in on such a wet afternoon, and their mother couldn't carry her off for a call on Mrs. Monroe at the President's House as she had talked of doing. Established in a big chair by the sitting-room fire with the blue cambric curtains drawn across the rain-washed windows and a circle of eager young faces gathered around her, Miss Julia tasted to the full the joys of home-coming after long exile in far countries.

"My, my!" the good lady mildly marveled. "How cities and children can grow in three years! I don't know which has surprised me most, the development of Washington in my absence or the way you boys and girls have shot up. Quentin and Ed are as tall as their father now, I've noticed, and Grace and Louise are young ladies. Even Sara is a little bigger and has put up her hair."

Sara smiled into the fire. Here was her aunt just back from a three-year absence on the other side

of the world and already she had begun saying "even Sara" as the rest of the family did. But could they be blamed for it, after all? Dignified, thoughtful Quentin; Grace with her beauty and queenly air; harum-scarum Ed; vivacious Louise; these four made such a complete coterie of young people to satisfy the hearts of parents and other relatives that it must have been awkward to have a fifth added unexpectedly, who was rather plain and showed no liveliness of wit but only a quiet humor which didn't attract notice, and who, strangely enough, preferred to listen in a family in which everybody else preferred to talk. No wonder they forgot her! But she was sensible enough not to mind much, and she was glad that her aunt had noticed that "even Sara" had put up her hair.

"I've come home to stay," Miss Julia announced to her youthful audience. "America is the best place for Americans. If I didn't fully realize that while I was in England, I knew it beyond a doubt before I left Vienna, Austria."

"Tell us about Vienna, Aunt Julia," Grace urged.

"Oh yes, Aunt Julia, tell us about the court ball you attended there," begged Louise, who doted on balls.

The boys groaned and their aunt looked at them apologetically.

"I had such an odd experience at that ball that I believe you boys may enjoy hearing about it as much as the girls," she said hurriedly, as if afraid they might run away. "I actually got lost in the

palace and wandered foot-loose for nearly an hour before I found my way back to the ballroom. And I sat and warmed myself by a fire in a little apartment which I strongly suspect was the Emperor's cabinet. Furthermore I helped myself to two papers from a wastebasket under the table to put in my satin slippers which had gotten so wet in crossing a rain-washed terrace that I was afraid of taking cold. Oh, I made myself quite at home in the Hofburg, I can tell you! I believe you'll be amused by the story."

With such a preface as this Quentin and Ed looked attentive and Grace and Louise more eager than before as Miss Julia launched into a detailed description of her experiences at the court ball in Vienna. Even Sara drew her stool closer and sat with her arm on her aunt's knee and her face turned upward to catch every word and expression.

"The floors of the vast rooms gleamed like ice," Miss Julia narrated, "and overhead multitudes of candles caused the great crystal chandeliers to scintillate with light. The graceful throng was as colorful as a rainbow and the dancers seemed hardly to touch the floor with their feet as they glided along but appeared to be borne over it on the waves of music flowing from a gallery above their heads. It was before the dancing, however, that the Emperor and Empress came in through great double doors and took their seats on the throne while the men bowed low and we women curtsied to the ground. Afterwards the imperial couple came down from

the dais and there was a *quadrille d'honneur* danced by the eight most princely guests."

"And you danced, too, Aunt Julia?" Louise questioned ecstatically.

"Not *that* dance," Miss Julia was forced to admit. "Dear me, no! I wasn't a princely guest but a very, very, unimportant person who had got an invitation to the ball more by luck than anything else. But afterwards, when their majesties had withdrawn, I danced once. However, I am not a good dancer, and I was glad when my escort offered to walk around with me instead of dancing again. He showed me all the public parts of the palace, through long picture galleries and apartments of state, but—and here comes the interesting part—he was a soldier and was sent for suddenly by his commanding officer so that he had to leave me alone in a remote part of the palace to find my own way back to the ballroom. I was astonished by the lack of courtesy the man showed, but those Austrians put their military duties above everything else and would leave a woman in the lurch any time if her convenience conflicted with even the most unimportant order from a superior in the army. There I was absolutely marooned among labyrinthian corridors in the Emperor's palace with no one anywhere around to direct me. First I blundered out on an uncovered terrace where rain had fallen and got my feet damp and then I wandered on until—you'll hardly believe me, children, but I was as cold as ice in those unheated halls, and my feet were wet,

and I was so generally uncomfortable that when I saw an open fire in an empty room I just walked in to warm myself.

"It was a small room furnished in red and gold, and in the center was a long table with pens, inkwells, and papers scattered over the top. A number of chairs stood around it in an uneven manner as if several people had pushed them back and risen hastily from the table not many minutes before. I was a little frightened, but because the fire felt good after those icy corridors, I stayed."

"And what happened, Aunt Julia?" Grace asked breathlessly, astonished by her aunt's temerity. She took etiquette very seriously and thought her aunt had behaved most strangely in a royal palace. "Were you caught?"

"Well, I sat there in a great throne-like chair warming myself by the hearth," the dauntless lady went on, chuckling softly as she recalled the incident, "and nobody appeared. The whole corridor was deserted. I began to feel quite at home and as my slippers simply wouldn't dry, their thin soles having absorbed moisture like a sponge, I looked around for a bit of paper to put in them for comfort and to prevent my taking cold. I saw a waste-paper basket on the floor under the table and from this I selected what looked like two discarded letters written on good thick paper, folded them several times, and slipped one into each satin pump. That gave my feet a nice warm dry feeling, and after I had rested a little longer I got up and unfurled my fan and sailed out

of the room with my head up in case I met somebody and had to look as if I had only been where I had a right to go."

The good lady paused to laugh at her own conduct.

"Did any one see you, Aunt Julia?" Louise asked enviously. She was of a rather daring nature herself and thought she would have enjoyed being footloose in a great royal palace like that.

"I passed a lackey at the bend of the corridor," Miss Julia went on, "but I am sure he thought I was the sister of the Empress at the least from the low bow he made me. I told him magnificently to precede me back to the ballroom and this he did with the greatest courtesy, so that I was soon safe with the friends who had brought me there. But I never mentioned my adventure at the time, as I was afraid of getting into trouble and having my departure delayed next day. To tell you the truth, my dears, I was glad to get out of Austria. That's no proper country for a free American citizen to visit. The shadow of the Holy Alliance is everywhere. Free speech is suppressed, the press is censored, spies are all around, and the atmosphere of intrigue is oppressive."

"What is the Holy Alliance, Aunt Julia?" one of the boys asked. It was Ed who asked the question, but it was Quentin, the elder and more serious brother, who listened most attentively to the answer.

"Why, it's a league into which the Emperors of Austria and Russia and the King of Prussia have

entered in order to—well, they *say* it's to mutually help and assist each other, to govern their people like fathers of families and to maintain peace and justice in their dominions. But this is only a beautiful theory and in reality the so-called Holy Alliance is a very unholy attempt to keep absolute power in the hands of the rulers, to suppress every form of liberty among the common people, and to defend the divine rights of kings. The Alliance has recently put the dethroned King of Spain back into power in spite of the fact that his subjects didn't want him, and he is now drenching Spain in blood in revenge for his former exile. That is the sort of thing this Holy Alliance does. It is pledged to put an end to representative government in whatever countries it may exist in Europe and to prevent its being introduced in those countries where it is not yet known."

"But why should this Alliance try to prevent nations from setting up the sort of governments they prefer?" Quentin demanded. He was a boy of strong principles, and this talk of a league of emperors and kings to keep the common people in subjection roused his infrequent anger.

"Because, as I have told you, my boy, a representative government interferes with the so-called divine right of princes to rule the people. All such governments, not only out and out republics but limited monarchies as well, must be put down, according to the solemn pledge of the members of the Holy Alliance. All the sovereigns of Europe have signed it except the King of England, the Pope of Rome, and

the Sultan of Turkey. England has evaded it as conflicting with her Constitution, the Pope has denounced it, and the Sultan has been excluded because of his religion."

Quentin's face flushed deeply with growing indignation. "But that is outrageous, Aunt Julia," he insisted.

"What? Excluding the Sultan?" his aunt teased him.

"No, the Alliance itself! What about America? Is the Alliance going to try to suppress free government over here? Will they try to establish kings on our continents?"

"I am sure they would like to," Miss Julia smiled, "but the Americas are so far away that I suppose we are in no danger."

"Mercy!" pleaded Louise. "Let's not talk politics. I want to hear about the dresses that were worn at the court ball. What did the Empress have on?"

Trying to please them all, Miss Julia shifted from one subject to another, telling the girls what they wanted to hear about social affairs and the latest styles in Europe and relating other matters to amuse the two boys, such as her visit to the field of Waterloo where Napoleon was defeated by Wellington and the terrible storms at sea which had delayed her ship on the voyage home until she was nearly three months on the Atlantic. The short autumn day drew towards its close and the firelight chased dark shadows across the gray cloth carpet into the

far corners of the room where a walnut "scrutoir" stood and where a Heppelwhite cheval glass gave back ruddy reflections. It also bathed in soft radiance the group gathered around the hearth, Miss Julia in her turban which, though not a matron, she felt entitled to wear because of advancing middle-age; tall Grace with her dark hair drawn smoothly up from the back of her neck and held in place by a high shell comb and her warm color enriched by the scarlet dress she wore; plump frivolous Louise in blue with two ringlets of golden hair on each side of her face; the boys in neatly fitting coats, flowered waistcoats, and long tight trousers; and finally Sara in a short-waisted merino frock with the narrow skirt reaching almost to her ankles and her indefinite colored hair "up" like her sisters'. Sitting there in the firelight they might have been the figures on a Christmas card in 1928 instead of real live people of 1823 who were in no degree conscious of looking artistic.

"I like this house," Miss Julia said, glancing about the room, her flow of conversation about Europe having given out for the moment. "When I left America three years ago you were all very uncomfortable in that boarding house on Capitol Hill as I remember distinctly. By what lucky chance did you secure this nice place with its attractive furnishings?"

To her surprise the girls and boys all began to giggle or grin, and after exchanging significant glances they went off into peals of laughter as if some joke were so amusing that they could not con-

trol their mirth in spite of noble efforts to do so.

"Why, what is all this about?" their aunt asked in disapproval. "Why do you laugh at my question? Are these good manners?"

"Excuse us, Aunt Julia," Quentin begged.

"Oh, yes, do please excuse us, ma'am," said Grace and Louise together.

"Not unless you tell me why you are laughing! But wait, wait, I begin to understand! This is the old Burton home, isn't it? You've moved into the famous haunted house of Washington?"

They all nodded delightedly.

"Mother and Father told us not to say a word to you unless you remembered," Grace hastened to explain. "But we just *had* to move somewhere, Aunt Julia, and you know how hard it is to find accommodations of any sort in Washington in winter. Father said he would not spend another season in that crowded boarding house and here was this place, all neatly furnished and nothing wrong with it except a ghost, so we moved in. It had stood empty so long that the rent is very reasonable, and we were never more comfortable in our lives."

"And have you seen the ghost?" Miss Julia asked laughingly.

"Only once. Mother saw it in the attic the day we came. She had taken a lantern and gone up there to hang up some clothes about dusk when suddenly we heard her scream and drop the lantern with a clatter. When Sara and Marybelle Fulton met her at the foot of the attic steps she said she had

seen something that looked like a ghost. But Mother has very calm nerves and bidding Sara bring her another light she and Father searched the attic for some explanation of her vision. However, it's still a mystery."

"I have very calm nerves, too," said Miss Julia smilingly, "so you need not hesitate to tell me everything. Does the ghost only appear in the attic?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; it's apt to appear anywhere in the house," Grace told her warningly.

"I wish it would appear to *me,*" said Ed longingly.

"I, too, would like to see it out of curiosity," Quentin, the serious-minded brother, acknowledged. "While I don't believe in ghosts, I've an open mind on the subject. It's an interesting scientific question."

"I should faint if I saw it," Grace shuddered.

"I should go into hysterics," said Louise.

Sara thought she would probably faint or have hysterics, too, but she did not say so. After all, one could not be absolutely sure how one would act under any given conditions, especially supernatural ones, and so she reserved her opinion. It was characteristic of Sara to do this.

"I believe I've forgotten what sort of ghost is supposed to haunt the place," Miss Julia mused. "It's a man, isn't it?"

"Yes, a soldier of the Revolution in full uniform," Grace explained. "A man in the prime of life. It's

said to be Major Burton, who died fifteen years ago."

"He really died, too, my dears, for I was at his funeral," Miss Julia assented. "I remember he was buried in a Continental uniform in which he fought."

"Well, his spirit comes back because everybody who has tried to live here since his widow gave up the house and went abroad to live has seen it. Mother is certain she saw something queer standing in a misty light up in the attic."

An English chime clock with gilt decorations and silver face which stood on the white mantel now struck the hour of four.

"Dinner time!" Miss Julia exclaimed. "I haven't forgotten at what hour social Washington dines. This has been a very pleasant afternoon for me, children. I have enjoyed talking with you more than with any of the great people I met abroad. We'll have another chat like this some other day."

The doors of the dining room were pushed open by a neat colored woman, Senator and Mrs. Moreland appeared, and all moved in to dinner. During the meal Miss Julia often looked at Sara, who sat so quietly between her eldest sister and brother and never spoke unless she was spoken to. What an odd, silent, little girl she was, to be sure, the aunt reflected! She would never be a beauty like Grace, even if she got rid of those freckles on her face, nor possess the vivacious charm of Louise, but she was a pleasing little thing and ought not to be submerged by her family in the way she was. And suddenly

Miss Julia was guiltily conscious of having brought Sara only one little present from abroad while the older girls had been given numerous pretty things. It really wasn't fair! They mustn't treat the child like Cinderella! And thinking of Cinderella the aunt naturally thought of slippers and court balls.

"Sara, dear," said Miss Julia when, after eight o'clock tea, they were all going up to bed that night, "come into my room for a few moments. I am really ashamed of having brought Grace and Louise so many more presents than I gave you. To tell the truth some of the things I gave them were meant for you but they showed such enthusiasm when they saw them that I let the gifts go where they were not designed to go. Now what shall I give you to make up for it? How would you like, for a souvenir, the slippers in which I danced at the court ball in Vienna? They are of silver satin embroidered in pearls and I wore them only once."

"But, Aunt Julia, you've given me quite enough," Sara protested.

"Would you like the slippers?" her aunt persisted, not arguing the question. "Then here they are. The papers from the Emperor's wastebasket are still inside, which will perhaps add to their value as a souvenir."

So Sara carried the slippers to her room a little later and put them in a big box on the shelf of her wardrobe in which she kept many small treasures. She was glad to have them, but she thought it would be a long, long time before she ever went to a ball.

CHAPTER V

THE COMING OF CARL

A STAGECOACH was approaching Washington, and on the box beside the driver sat a boy of nineteen who was so elegantly dressed that the coachman thought he must be very rich and wondered why he had not posted from New York in a private carriage instead of taking a public conveyance.

"Austrian, ain't you?" the driver asked his passenger as they jogged along together.

"How did you guess that?" the boy demanded in surprise.

"Well, you look foreign somehow. I can nearly always spot a foreigner. And then agin, I saw 'Carl Rechberg, Vienna, Austria,' on your trunk as I was putting it on the stage."

The young passenger laughed at this.

"To be sure! I had forgotten that my name and address are on my trunk. Your guess was not so remarkable after all. Yes, I'm from Austria."

"It's a long distance from Vienna to Washington. Mind telling what brings you so far?"

"Oh, just the desire to see the world."

"Stayin' long?"

"That depends on how I like this part of the world I'm out to see."

"You ain't telling much about yourself, are you?" the man grumbled. "All right. It's all the same to me."

The disgruntled driver struck his horses and the stage lurched forward at a more rapid rate. Carl Rechberg regarded the fellow a bit dubiously. Why did he not accept his explanation that he was merely a tourist in America? Had he—Carl—been acting suspiciously in any way? Had he said anything he shouldn't on this last day of his long trip? But presently he laughed inwardly at his own anxiety. Of course the man had no reason to suspect his purpose in coming to America. He was just getting nervous.

Carl showed a keen interest in everything along the road, and his gray eyes missed no sight they passed. He was evidently a lively, cheerful boy, ready to laugh at anything, and the driver could not long remain offended at any one so good-humored.

"One thing I'll say for you," the man grudgingly admitted, "you ain't haughty a bit!"

"Did you think I would be?" Carl laughed.

"Well, most Europeans are, I've noticed. Some of 'em seem to come over here just to show us Americans how high and mighty they can act. I've seen some of 'em act so haughty I'd like to stick a pin in 'em."

"If you ever catch me acting haughty I give you leave to stick a pin in me," Carl told him.

"Are you just a plain mister or something fancy?" the driver wanted to know.

"My father is a count," said Carl, with a hint of conceit in his tone, "but just call me Mr. Rechberg."

"I'll bet a button you ain't Mr. Rechberg," the driver retorted.

Carl turned very red and then a little white.

"What on earth made you say that?" he demanded.

"Dunno," the driver chuckled. "Said it for fun to see what you'd do. When European folks with titles come over here they generally come in—in—"

"Incognito?" Carl suggested.

"Yes, that's it."

"Well, I'm traveling under my real name," the boy declared, but as he said it he flushed again and was very angry at himself for doing so.

The driver changed the subject.

"How was the ocean behavin' when you come across?" he asked.

"The ocean? Oh, it behaved very decorously, I believe."

"Then that's more'n it's been doin' all summer. A lady who was on the stage with me a few days ago said her ship had been nearly three months in getting across from Europe. She was an American who'd been over to Europe on a trip. Said she'd left there in July and was just gettin' here."

"I was fortunate to escape the storms," Carl explained. "My ship made much better time for I sailed later than that and here I am coming into Washington only a few days behind the lady you mention."

The driver fell silent for a while and gave his full attention to his horses. The faster the coach lurched forward, the more the passengers were shaken up until Carl was painfully aware of every bone in his body. This was the last day of the long trip from New York to Washington, and the young traveler yearned for rest and hoped he would find it in the capital city. But his interest in the American scene had never flagged. He had enjoyed the whole journey.

"Are we near the city?" he asked his companion toward nightfall when it seemed they must surely be somewhere in the vicinity of Washington.

"We're in it," the driver told him laconically.

"Oh—ah!" Carl murmured, looking around him at the woods.

"You'll be seeing some houses directly," the man assured him optimistically. "If it wasn't getting dark you could see the Capitol now and maybe the President's House, though they're more'n a mile apart. We've got street lamps again this year after several years of darkness, but I notice they ain't lit yet. This here road we're turnin' in now is the main thoroughfare, called Pennsylvania Avenue. There's been a law passed to keep folks from hitching their horses to the trees along here and letting stray animals roam about and eat 'em and so they'll have a chance to grow now and look pretty. All the streets have been laid out and named on paper and all Washington needs to be a big city is buildings and pavements. Already the population is growing and

houses going up pretty fast. There are stores, too, and the ladies don't have to go to Georgetown or Alexandria to shop any more. Give us time, and we'll have as fine a capital city as any in Europe."

"I see no reason why you should be stinted with time," was Carl's casual comment. "Unless you are so foolish as to meddle in the affairs of the Old World you ought to have a long future before you."

"I guess we won't meddle in Europe's affairs, and I guess we won't let Europe meddle in ours neither," declared the loquacious driver. "Here you are, sir, Strother's Hotel! Don't fall over that pile of bricks in the street."

Carl made his way around the brick pile and into the tavern. He was afraid he would find it too crowded to afford him a room, but Congress was not yet in session and the members and their families were arriving slowly in the city. When all the Congressmen were assembled, it would indeed be difficult for a visitor to find a room in hotel or boarding house. He would be lucky if he got a bed in a room with several others. But, meanwhile, such a well-set-up and prosperous looking young man as nineteen-year-old Carl had no trouble in securing immediate accommodations.

Before going to dinner the boy attached to his watch-chain an odd little seal, inconspicuous but clearly engraved with an unusual design, which dangled against the breast of his flowered waistcoat and was visible to any eye when he left his coat open. At the table he saw a swarthy man, who seemed to

be a Spaniard, glance several times at the charm, but he made no comment and neither attempted to speak to the other. Yet Carl was not surprised when the Spaniard followed him upstairs to his room later. As soon as he heard a low rap on the door he knew who it was.

"Good evening, señor," the Spaniard said as he entered and closed the door behind him. "You are wearing on your watch-chain an emblem that interests me very much. I have the same signet on my ring here."

Carl looked at the ring and nodded. "I bring you a message," he told him, and then added, as if on second thought, "We are mystically entwined—!"

"—and forever bound!" the other finished for him as if completing a password. "Wait one moment, señor, while I summon a third person," he said quickly and left the room. He returned with a big man whose hair was as ruddy as a fox's and the muscles of whose great arms rippled beneath his tight-fitting coat. In the black stock at his throat this second visitor wore a pin with the same emblem engraved upon it which ornamented Carl's watch-charm and the Spaniard's ring. Looking at the man's bulk it occurred to Carl that he would hate to be in the clutches of such a giant.

"This is Barin Ivan Kurbski of Russia," said the Spaniard by way of introduction. "I am Señor Ferdinand Godoy of Madrid. And now, young man, who are you?"

"I am Carl Rechberg of Vienna and I bring you a

message from Prince Metternich, which is to say from the Emperor Francis himself," Carl answered.

"It is fortunate that you come when you do for we plan to sail very shortly for South America," Godoy told him. "See if there is any one in the hall, Kurbski, and then bar the door," he directed his gigantic friend.

Carl casually seated himself while these precautions were being taken and reflected with amusement that these two men made him think of mind and body personified separately. The little dark, shrewd Spaniard seemed to be the directing power of the partnership and the burly Russian the muscular slave. He thought that he would hate to have either of them for his enemy and to have both leagued against him would be a misfortune indeed.

"And now, Rechberg, you will give us your message," said Godoy when he and Kurbski were seated with him beside the fire in the inn bedroom.

Carl slept late next morning. It was noon before he woke to his first day in Washington and when he opened his eyes he saw Godoy sitting in his room. The Spaniard had perhaps aided his awakening by tapping the floor with his heel, moving a chair about, and in other ways disturbing the peace. He had not felt justified in openly arousing the fatigued youth.

"Good morning, Rechberg," he greeted the young Austrian as the boy raised himself on his elbow. "While you slept I have been at work and while you dress I will talk. I hope I am not intruding?"

"Not at all," Carl politely assured him. "Talk all you like."

But the Spaniard eyed the boy closely for several moments before he began. He seemed a little uncertain of his ground. Then he shrugged away his own doubts.

"I am sorry you dislike the cuisine of this hotel so much, Rechberg," he said in a solemn tone, "but I really cannot blame you. It is indeed poor."

Carl, who had risen from his bed and was half dressed, looked surprised. He had enjoyed the meal he had eaten in the tavern the night before and this was his first intimation that he had found any fault with the food. But he said nothing.

"And I don't wonder that you found it hard to get to sleep last night for the noise," Godoy continued. "A tavern is always a noisy place and never more so than when it is full of politicians."

Again Carl's brows went up, for he had slept splendidly, but still he held his tongue.

"I sympathize with your wish to find board and lodging in a private home," added Godoy, "and fortunately I have discovered the very place for you. A certain southern Senator named Moreland has leased a house for the winter which is larger than his needs require and he would like very well to rent one of the rooms. He has a charming family, I understand. It consists of his wife and five children and an unmarried sister, just back from Europe, who lives with them. The sister is getting up in years and will not interest you but the sons and daughters

are near your own age. Quentin, the eldest son, is a serious-minded fellow, I learn, with whom you can cautiously discuss politics if you are so minded. Ed, the second son, is harum-scarum enough to do almost any foolish thing and may be useful for that reason. Miss Grace, the eldest daughter, is eighteen and very, very pretty and rather vain and will be particularly attracted to you if you mention your father's title. Miss Louise, age sixteen, is vivacious and frivolous and is sure to like any nice-looking young fellow who can dance. There is even another daughter, but she is the youngest and I did not learn her name. Now don't you think you would like to board in this household a while, Rechberg, and get acquainted with these people?"

Carl smiled. "You have certainly learned a vast amount about the Moreland family," he commented admiringly. "But what am I to do when I get acquainted with them?"

"No one knows that better than you do, yourself, since it was you who brought us the Emperor's message."

"But I was pledged only to deliver the message," Carl pointed out. "The matter itself was to be left in your hands."

"Yes, but unfortunately there is a reason why Kurbski and I must keep away from the Morelands. We traveled through the southern states this summer trying to learn something of the temper of the average citizen of this country regarding South America, and on our way back to Washington we

encountered Senator Moreland's family. I had the rather foolish inspiration to hold him up one evening and seize his papers in the hope of learning something more of the official sentiment of the nation about the subject in which we are interested. But I learned nothing and returned his box that same night. I don't know which was the most unwise, the holdup or the subsequent return of the box. Anyhow, he must be very curious about those two highwaymen, and Kurbski and I dare not come in contact with him again. That is one of the reasons we want your help in this case."

Carl stood by a mirror tying his cravat, and he did this several times over without making a reply. Hoping to interest him more deeply in the project, Godoy went on talking about the Morelands.

"The house in which they live is said to be haunted," he related. "Before the Senator rented it, it had stood empty for years as nobody would live in it. It's called the old Burton place and rumor says a certain defunct Major Burton roams about in it after nightfall, wearing the Continental uniform in which he was buried. Those who meet him know him for a ghost because they can see right through him as if he were made out of glass, but it is disconcerting to encounter even the most transparent person in lonely places after dark and life in the house must be exciting."

This idly given information had a surprising effect upon the boy whom Godoy was trying to influence.

He turned away from the mirror and came over to the hearth.

"I will do as you wish; I will seek lodging in the Moreland home," he agreed. "This moment I will set out to secure their extra room before some one else takes it. Now how do I find the house—you say it is called the old Burton place?"

"Yes, better ask for it that way. Not everybody knows where the Morelands live, but anybody can direct you to the Burton house. Give the Austrian minister as your reference and don't mention my name or Kurbski's. Good luck to you, Don Carl! The fate of two continents may hang upon your success in this undertaking."

CHAPTER VI

SARA GROWS SUSPICIOUS

I COULD shake you, Sara," said Marybelle Fulton as she and her chum were coming out of school together the next afternoon. "If you'll hold my books for me I'll do it, too!"

"But why?" Sara asked with amiable curiosity.

"Because you let Mistress Pickering think you are stupid by always keeping quiet and never trying to answer a question unless it's asked you directly. When your class was being complimented individually to-day, you were almost forgotten and all that was said about you at last was that you are well behaved. 'Sara Moreland is very well behaved!' " Marybelle mimicked the teacher in a high falsetto. "I waited for her to add something else but she stopped there. It made me most awfully mad."

"You are just jealous because nobody ever said that about you," Sara asserted demurely.

"You see!" exclaimed Marybelle triumphantly. "You've got wit enough, but you never show it to anybody but me. First thing you know they'll begin saying Even Sara in school as they do in your home. You've just got to do something to bring yourself into notice, Sara. I won't have you treated like a little nobody."

"Oh, I'm very happy," said Sara cheerfully. "Or I would be if you and I didn't have to separate at that big tree yonder and go in opposite directions to our homes. Come to see me soon."

Marybelle promised she would and, waving their hands to each other, one girl ran off toward a boarding house on Capitol Hill while the other hurried on her long walk to Burton place.

As Sara walked along, a little faster than a well-behaved girl should, perhaps, she constantly looked down at the ground to see where to step to avoid puddles and rocks and with her eyes at her feet this way she suddenly saw something glittering in the mud of the road. She tucked her books more firmly under one arm, held up her fur-bordered pelisse in one hand, and bent low to pick it up. Examining the object closely, she saw that it was a gentleman's stickpin with a very odd design upon it.

"A moment, little girl, one moment!" shouted a heavy voice behind her and a great giant of a man with bright red hair under his high beaver hat came lumbering toward her. As she saw him Sara felt her own hair prick at the roots, for she recognized him instantly as the Russian she had seen at Granny White's tavern on the way to Washington and she was also pretty sure that he was one of the two highwaymen who had held up their party in the woods for the strange reason of borrowing her father's papers. So she had every reason to regard him with fear and distrust.

"What have you there, little girl? What did you

find?" the heavy voice asked with a foreign accent. "You must tell me what you picked up."

"A pin," answered Sara, and then wished she hadn't told him so frankly what it was. She was quite sure he was not above laying claim to something that was not his. Nothing could make her believe that the holdup in the woods had been any sort of a joke.

"It is mine," said the man. "I dropped it and have been scouring this road for it."

"You will have to describe it before I give it to you," Sara declared in a businesslike tone. And she closed her small brown fist over the stickpin as calmly as if the great hands of the man could never break through her grasp.

"Eh? Well, it—ah—it has a design engraved on it," the red-haired person explained rather stupidly.

"What kind of a design?"

"Oh—ah, just a design. I don't know how to describe the thing."

Here the other man came up. The sight of the Spaniard caused Sara to close her hand even tighter as if to express a still greater distrust. He laughed and showed her a ring he wore. "The design on the pin is exactly like the design on my ring, señorita," he stated with a little deferential bow.

Sara was forced to agree and immediately handed the pin to the big man.

"I thank you, miss," he said, and his hand trembled as he took it. The loss of the pin had apparently shaken him badly.

"I told you that you should have had the seal set in a ring like mine," his companion rebuked him in a low harsh voice as they walked off together. "A pin can be lost too easily and such a loss might have very serious consequences."

Sara went on her way home, amused and a little puzzled by the incident. The pin had not looked to be very valuable and she marveled that the big man should have been in such a stew over its loss. But then she remembered the duplicate design on the other man's ring. There must, she reflected, be some significance in that. The ring and the pin were perhaps the emblems of a secret society like the Masons, which had two lodges in the city at that time. But she disliked those two men so much that she thought it must be an unlovely fraternity that numbered them among its members.

Halfway home Sara was met by her brother Ed. One or the other of her brothers always met her now that the days were getting so short. School hours were long in 1823 and there were many wide commons and swamps to pass in that great stretch of almost uninhabited country which was called the city of Washington.

"I've got some news for you," was the first thing Ed said to her when she had approached within speaking distance. "We've got a boarder at our house. You know father has been wanting to rent our extra room and to-day somebody applied for it and we took him."

Sara was not sure that she liked this. "Who is

it?" she questioned without enthusiasm. "Some old grandfather?"

"Grandfather, my eye! He's just Quentin's age, nineteen. His name is Carl Rechberg and he has just arrived in this country from Austria. His father is a nobleman, Count Rechberg of Vienna, and he has sent his son out to see the world as a finishing touch to his education. Reaching Washington last night, Carl found the tavern too noisy for his liking and so this morning he set out to find a quieter place to board and came to us. All the family is daft about him. Grace and Louise are already scrapping over him."

"Do you like him?" Sara asked, trying to adjust her mind to this addition to their family circle.

"Yes, I think he's a nice fellow, and so does Quen. Mother and Father are treating him like a third son, and Aunt Julia has been practicing her French vocabulary on him and reminiscing about Vienna. It only remains for you to fall at his feet, and his conquest of the Moreland family will be complete."

Sara walked on toward home in her brother's wake (to have kept beside him would have been difficult for Ed's mode of progress was erratic) and mused upon the information he had given her. She felt interested in the new boarder but not much excited. What did it matter what she thought of the young stranger when it was pretty certain he would never notice her? The original Cinderella with her two ugly sisters was really in luck compared with Sara, for even if her fairy godmother had not hap-

pened along to rescue her from oblivion it would have been impossible for two ugly old women to have permanently overshadowed a beautiful girl. Sara's case was more serious. She was a plain girl overshadowed by two very pretty sisters, hardly older than herself, and though she was never unkindly treated the old fairy story was applicable to her in many ways and she might have been excused for thinking her lot even harder than that of Cinderella herself. Fortunately she didn't think much about it at all.

The house came in view. It was a lonely place to be situated on what purported to be a city street, for on each side of it were great commons and its nearest neighbor was hardly visible from the attic windows. Sara saw that the candles were already lighted in the lower rooms and were casting their glow out in the cool autumn dusk, while the music of harp and spinet suggested a party.

"Is there company for dinner?" she asked Ed.

"Nobody but the new boarder. You'd think he was young Lafayette from the way the girls are entertaining him," Ed chuckled. "But I'm not going to complain," he added, smacking his lips and rubbing a vital part of his anatomy. "With Grace and Louise and Aunt Julia and Mother all sweet on him, there'll be wonderful things to eat while he's here."

Sara left him out-of-doors to a pleasant daydream of custards and tarts and thickly iced cakes while she slipped quietly inside the hall and went up to her little room at the back of the house. She put away

her bonnet and wrap and changed her muddy walking shoes for house slippers and her school dress for a book muslin, thrust a high comb in her hair, and went down to the parlor from whence the music came. She stole in and took a seat without attracting any notice except from her mother, who asked if she were tired and then turned her attention elsewhere. The others paid no more heed than if a little gray kitten had come in to curl up on the hearth rug.

A strange boy was sitting beside Quentin and Sara regarded him closely. If this were the new boarder he was certainly a good-looking boy and most elegantly dressed. Her eye ran quickly over his slim figure and took in the details of his costume, claret-colored coat above long light trousers, white cambric cravat at his throat, two waistcoats of different colors showing one above the other with a fob ribbon dangling from one of the pockets. Suddenly Sara caught her breath in surprise. On his fob dangled a charm with the identical design upon it that she had already seen twice before that afternoon, on the pin she had found in the road and restored to a big red-haired man and on the signet ring of his small dark companion. They had been foreigners, she was sure, and here was another foreigner wearing the same queer emblem. If she had guessed right about the first two being members of a secret society, then this Austrian boy must also belong to it. Instinctively she began to distrust Carl Rechberg. Her parents, her aunt, and her brothers and sisters might receive him eagerly into the family circle, but one

member of the household felt that she was not going to like him.

Presently Carl noticed her sitting there quietly by her mother's side and said something in a low voice to Quentin.

"What girl?" Sara heard her brother question. "Oh, that's my youngest sister."

"Won't you introduce me?" Carl asked.

So Quentin brought him across the room to present him to the only member of the family he had not yet met, and the others watched with admiration as the young Austrian bowed over the small brown hand of their youngest. How polite he was to everybody—even Sara!—was the thought that passed through every mind. But Sara herself was vaguely hostile, and Carl saw it in her eyes as he straightened up. He had not captivated her on sight as he had all the others. She did not seem at all impressed by his charming bow, and he felt a little chagrined as he returned to his seat. He wished he had not asked to be presented to the ill-natured child.

"Count," said Louise, eager to atone for any lack of cordiality on her small sister's part, "has Aunt Julia told you—"

"Please do not call me Count," he interrupted with perceptible embarrassment. "I have no claim to that title."

"Oh, but yes you have!" Louise contradicted calmly. "If your father is a count then you are, too. I know that is the custom in Austria. Aunt Julia

says so and besides, I've met other Austrians here in Washington."

"It may be so in some cases but it is not true in mine," the boy insisted. "I have no title."

She was disappointed.

"I've been calling you Count all day," she pouted, "and you never said before that you didn't want me to address you that way. We have *all* been calling you Count."

"I misunderstood," he apologized. "I thought you were calling me Carl. That is what I want you to call me. Yes, I'm serious! Why not? I'm about the same age as the rest of you."

A discussion ensued as to whether it would be quite proper to call the young foreigner by his first name. As he came of a titled family it might seem too familiar to the strict society of Washington. Etiquette, the most careful decorum, had to be observed in the capital, or, they all agreed, there would be terrific gossip. It seemed from what the ladies said that the capital of this democratic nation was a hotbed of gossip. If it became known that Grace and Louise Moreland were calling a foreigner of titled birth by his first name just because he was rooming at their house, other young belles would accuse them of putting on airs and it would be talked about at the tea tables every evening. But finally Mrs. Moreland and Miss Julia gave consent to his being called Carl in private if he was referred to more formally in public.

"The United States Senate spends no more

thought on a political question than the ladies of Washington spend on points of etiquette," Senator Moreland told the young Austrian jocosely. "But you must not judge the spirit of America by the snobbishness sometimes exhibited in the social circles of our cities," he added patriotically. "Well, let's go in to dinner! Joe is rolling open the doors."

The four o'clock dinner was everything Ed had hoped it would be, and as they were rising from the table Mrs. Moreland assured Carl that he would have something else before bedtime.

"We have tea at eight o'clock," she informed the young boarder in her rôle of landlady.

"But there will be just cold bread and butter to eat with the tea," Ed warned him, receiving at once a stabbing glance from Grace and also a frown from Louise.

"Nonsense, Ed, you know better than that," his eldest sister reproved him. "We will have cakes and bonbons and preserves and perhaps an ice as we *always* do! Won't we, Mother?"

Ed choked. If Grace had not accented the false adverb he might have withstood the delightful surprise of her announcement, but as it was he had to beat a hasty retreat. Fortunately Carl's manners were equal to the occasion, and no one would have guessed from his expression that he strongly suspected the usual evening tea was to be glorified for his delectation. Perhaps he also suspected that not every boarder would have been pampered like this by the Moreland ladies, and he would hardly have

been a normal boy if he had not felt pleasantly flattered.

It was certainly a delightful situation, he told himself. He could hardly have found a more attractive place to board or pleasanter people. He thought Grace the prettiest girl he had ever seen, Louise very amusing, Quentin and Ed interesting companions, and the three older people all that was hospitable and kind. He did not give another thought to Sara. She had not favorably impressed him, and the more vivid members of the family pushed her entirely out of his mind. A rude child was the way he classified her because of her hostile look when they were introduced.

But while they were having high tea at eight o'clock this odd, quiet, little girl again intruded on his notice. She was sitting on a hassock, drinking her tea, when she raised her eyes unexpectedly and meeting his glance asked him a question.

"What is that seal you have on your watch-fob?" she queried with childlike interest.

"Watch-fob? Seal?" the boy repeated, going red. "What do you mean? Oh—ah—this?"

"Yes," Sara answered, noticing his embarrassment and wondering about it.

"Why, it's just a charm," he smilingly informed her.

"May I see it in my hands?"

"Sara, don't be curious," her sister Grace reproved her, really surprised that the child should

speak to a stranger in this bold fashion. She was usually silent enough to satisfy any older sister.

"I beg your pardon," Sara said to Carl then.

"Oh, you may see it," he answered, willing to humor the little girl. And he detached the charm from his fob and handed it to her.

When Sara had the emblem in her own hands she knew beyond a doubt it was the same as that on the Russian's pin and the Spaniard's ring. It was a curious coincidence if nothing more. She gave it back to him with thanks and blushed so deeply at her own temerity in asking to see it that she looked even younger than her fourteen years.

"Now, Sara, you had better run upstairs to bed," Grace told her in a big sister tone. And when she was gone the older girl added to Carl: "I can't imagine what made her ask to see your watch-charm. She is not usually inquisitive."

Carl reattached the seal to his watch without comment, but the next morning Sara noticed that he no longer wore it. And because he had put it off she felt more than ever convinced that there was something significant about it. He had certainly removed it very quickly after she had asked to see it.

She went to school before time that morning because she had so many things to tell Marybelle. She wanted to tell her about meeting that Russian and Spaniard again and finding the pin in the road and above all she must tell her quickly about this handsome young Austrian nobleman who had come to board at her house. And perhaps Marybelle could

help her find out the meaning of the queer emblem which all these three foreigners—the Spaniard, the Russian, and the young Austrian—wore somewhere about them.

CHAPTER VII

SARA AND MARYBELLE SOLVE A CIPHER

MISTRESS PICKERING'S school for young ladies was established in the small brick cottage where she made her home. There was a wall which enclosed a good-sized garden, and down in one corner there were fruit trees. The girls called this corner of the yard the orchard, and on mellow Indian summer days it was a favorite resort with pupils of all ages. Sometimes the girls came early in order to sit there and talk before school opened for the day, and as Marybelle Fulton was usually one of these Sara was sure she would find her chum there on this bright October morning. She hardly hoped to find her alone, but it just happened that nobody but Marybelle and Sara herself had come to school before time that day.

As Sara opened the gate and ran down the sloping yard she saw her friend standing at the foot of a gnarled apple tree gazing wistfully upward. On a branch high above her head hung a big yellow Pippin, and that a wicked idea was dawning in Marybelle's mind could not have been denied by any one who saw her. Even as Sara approached she took hold of a low bough with each hand and with a stealthy glance toward the house put her foot in a crotch.

"Those who in climbing are expert
Seldom escape disgrace or hurt;
And when commands they disregard
A fall is but a just reward."

Sara recited reprovingly at her elbow, quoting from one of the juvenile books of the day.

"Oh, is that you, Sara!" Marybelle exclaimed in relief at sight of her chum. "I thought at first it was old Miss Pick herself, and I nearly jumped out of my shoes. Give me a push up and we'll eat that apple together."

"Please don't, Marybelle," Sara begged her. "If you tear your frock you'll be kept in after school, and I want you to go home with me to spend the night. There is somebody I want you to meet, and I've lots of things to tell you about."

Marybelle wavered. She had her mouth fixed for that juicy apple, but she was also curious to hear what Sara had to tell and she wanted to accept that invitation to spend the night. So virtue triumphed and the two girls sat down on a bench together.

"Who is it you want me to meet at your house?" Marybelle asked. "And what have you to talk about?"

"I'll begin at the beginning—" said Sara.

"No, don't," Marybelle hurriedly interrupted. "Begin at the most interesting place and then go back to the beginning. I hate to be bored with beginnings before I know whether the climax is going to interest me or not."

"Well, then, we've got a boarder at our house who is only nineteen years old and awfully good-looking and an Austrian nobleman and maybe a villain," Sara stated, cramming as much interest as she could into one sentence.

Marybelle sat up straighter at this. It sounded better than she had expected.

"A boarder who is a nobleman and maybe a villain," she repeated. "How lovely! What is his name and title and crime?"

"I'm not sure about the crime," Sara confessed. "He may be perfectly innocent and harmless. His name is Carl Rechberg, and we think he has the title of Count, because his father is a Count, but he pretends he hasn't any title at all himself."

"If his father is a Count then he is, too. That's the way it is in Austria," Marybelle affirmed.

"Yes, that's what we have heard, but anyhow he prefers to be called just Mr. Rechberg when he isn't called Carl. He asked us to call him Carl."

"And what makes you think he may be a villain?" her friend urged.

"To explain that I'll have to go back to the beginning," Sara insisted firmly.

Marybelle sighed but agreed. She realized that beginnings are necessary parts of everything.

"I've told you, haven't I," Sara began, a little doubtfully, "about our carriage being held up on the way to Washington by two highwaymen in masks? Of course I must have told you that at some time.

It isn't possible I could have failed to tell you of that adventure."

"You told me, but you said it was a practical joke somebody played on your father and that everything that was taken was returned later. My father's constituents are sometimes guilty of horseplay like that, too, and there isn't anything we can do but grin and bear it."

"Well, it may have been a joke and it may not. Father has come to believe it really was a joke (a joke with too much point to it, he says, because the jokers certainly read all his papers) but I never have been certain of it. I believe the Spaniard and the Russian (I told you about them, too, didn't I?) who were at the tavern with us the night before we were held up, were the highwaymen, and I can't believe two foreigners like that were playing any sort of joke when they stopped a United States Senator and read his papers. However it's just a guess of mine that they were the guilty parties. Nobody has ever suspected them but me. I tried to tell father what I thought, but when I remember how absent-minded he was I believe he didn't pay any attention."

"He would have paid attention to me," said Marybelle, "because I would have hung on to his coat tails until he did. But go on! Do you think there is any connection between that Spaniard and Russian who held you up and this young Austrian at your house?"

Then Sara told her about meeting the Spaniard and the Russian again in the road the previous afternoon and returning a pin she had found on which

there was a strange-looking emblem that was duplicated on a ring they had. And how, going home, she had discovered the new boarder wearing an emblem just like it on his watch-fob. He had been embarrassed when she asked to see it and had left it off this morning.

"I believe they are all three members of a secret society," Sara finished. "They may be foreign spies."

"But would a Spaniard, a Russian, and an Austrian all be spying together?" Marybelle asked wonderingly. "I should as soon imagine a dog, a cat, and a mouse going hunting together as all those different nationalities chumming up."

"Aunt Julia told us something about a league of nations in Europe, but I don't remember all she said," Sara explained vaguely. "I'll have to ask her again."

A short silence fell between the girls as Marybelle thought over what Sara had told her. In concentrating on the matter she began to whistle softly as she frequently did when thinking hard.

"Surely my ears must deceive me! Surely that is a little boy I hear whistling, not one of my young ladies!" exclaimed a voice behind the clump of trees and the two girls turned around in a hurry to see prim Mistress Pickering approaching their retreat. They stood up quickly and dropped a curtsy.

"Yes, ma'am, it was a little boy going by on the other side of the wall," Marybelle answered her

promptly. "I think he was probably a ventriloquist from the way he threw his voice over here."

"You will both go indoors now and occupy yourselves with your lessons," said the teacher, pretending not to hear Marybelle. "The other pupils are gathering and school will soon begin."

So they left Mistress Pickering to take her customary morning constitutional about the yard before the work of the day commenced and walked primly across the grass and into the cottage. But before they separated Marybelle promised to go home with Sara after school to spend the night, and then she could meet Carl and decide for herself whether he was a foreign spy or not. The girls thought it fun to have this secret together.

When the long school day was over Sara and Marybelle set out for Sara's house, Marybelle sending word to her mother by a classmate that she was going to spend the night with the Morelands. She knew her parents would not object.

"You certainly do live at the end of everywhere, Sara," Marybelle remarked sadly as they trudged through the late afternoon sunlight across the wide commons which separated the old Burton place from its neighbors. "Even for the fun of living in a haunted house I wouldn't want to walk this far every day. Shh! Listen! I hear somebody groaning. Does your ghost ever leave the house and come out on the road to meet you?"

Sara halted and harkened. Somebody certainly was groaning in a thicket just ahead. If they had

been farther on their way she would have feared it was Ed who had come to meet her and met with a mishap, but it wasn't probable that her brother had come this far from the house. He usually waited at a turn of the road much farther down.

"Lawdy, lawdy, lawdy!" murmured the voice in the thicket and then groaned again.

"Come on!" cried Marybelle to her companion. "I'm not afraid of anybody who says 'Lawdy!' That's just a pickaninny who has stumped his toe."

Marybelle's guess was not a bad one. When the girls parted the bushes in the thicket they saw a colored boy sitting on the ground holding a bare foot with both hands and rocking to and fro as he groaned. He was a little too old to be called a pickaninny and he had stuck a thorn in his foot instead of stumping his toe, but Marybelle was satisfied with her deduction.

"You see!" she said to Sara, and then to the boy: "Oh, it's not as bad as all that! Can't you walk a little? Hadn't you better limp along to a doctor instead of carrying on so?"

"What were you doing out here on the commons?" Sara asked. "This road doesn't lead anywhere but to our house. Were you going to Senator Moreland's place?"

"Yessum, I wuz takin' a letter to a gemmun dat bo'ds dar," the boy explained. "Don't see how I's gwiner git so fur now," he added mournfully.

"I'll deliver it for you," Sara offered. "I'm one of the family. Now you hop along back the way you

came and stop at the first house you come to and have your foot wrapped up."

The letter which was now transferred to Sara was folded together and sealed with wax. Across the folded paper was written "Hon. Carl Rechberg" in a small precise hand and the two girls could not resist studying the superscription as they walked along holding the letter up between them. Had a man or a girl indited it? Was it an invitation to a party or something more serious?

"Look!" Sara exclaimed suddenly. "Oh, Marybelle, look at that!"

"Look at what?" asked the wondering Marybelle.

"The seal on the back! The impression on the wax! It's the design that I saw three times yesterday, on a pin, a ring, and Carl's watch-charm."

"Oho! The seal of the secret society," said Marybelle, growing interested. "Don't you wish we could open this and read it?"

Sara did wish it very much. Of course, she might be foolish in imagining there was a secret society and that Carl Rechberg and the mysterious Spaniard and Russian were members but the discoveries she had made were curious and fitted together oddly enough. She felt that if she could only read this note she would know the truth and it might be something worth learning, something of importance to her country. Only, of course she couldn't open it. She wasn't authorized by her government to do anything like that.

The sun was sinking rapidly and the commons

growing dusky and cold. The girls walked faster and were glad to see Ed coming to meet them in his casual fashion, stopping to throw a pine cone at a squirrel, to swing by his hands from the limb of a tree, and to bend over a long crooked stick in the hopes of it being a snake. When he saw that his sister had a companion he turned immediately on his heel and started back the way he had come, but by walking slowly he permitted the girls to keep his back in view and he was therefore near enough to hear them if they screamed for aid. Ed considered this all the duty of a gentleman and in this manner escorted the girls home.

"Just you wait," Sara promised Marybelle as they approached the house. "In a few moments you are going to meet another young man who is so painfully polite that Ed's rudeness will seem attractive. Look! There he is on the porch."

Marybelle thus had her first view of Carl. His slender figure was outlined against the lighted doorway behind him and he held himself so erectly and his clothes were so elegant and his face so handsome that Marybelle, the tomboy, thrilled just as nearly every other girl did who met him.

"Oh, Sara, if that's a highwayman, I wouldn't mind being held up every day of my life!" she whispered enthusiastically.

"He wasn't one of the highwaymen," Sara answered, but her tone was tart. She was disappointed in Marybelle. Her chum was acting in the same silly way her sisters did over Carl. What did they

see in such a fop? she wondered. For Sara came from that part of the southwest where Andrew Jackson was the popular hero, and she sturdily preferred a leather hunting-shirt to a satin waistcoat. Carl, as a product of an old European civilization, was a strange type to her and she couldn't help feeling a little contemptuous of him as well as distrustful.

Carl took the letter she handed him with one of his graceful bows and acknowledged his introduction to Marybelle with another. But as the girls walked away a smile twitched his lips and his eyes followed Sara. What a queer little specimen of the backwoods she was in spite of education and fashionable clothes! he thought. So freckled and plain and a little gawky! The girl with her was no product of civilization either, but she looked handsome and high spirited compared with Sara, as a lively squirrel with a dormouse. His ideal girl was the rosy dimpled type with tousled curls or else a patrician brunette like Grace Moreland.

Carl went indoors to read his note by candlelight, and when he had glanced over it he dropped it carelessly on a marbletop table and left it lying there open.

"You'd better take your letter with you, Carl," Grace called to him as he was starting upstairs. "Some one might pick it up and read it just to see what it is before throwing it in the fire."

"Anybody who wants to read it may do so for

all I care," the boy laughed as he continued on his way. "And it may be thrown in the fire at any time. It's nothing."

"What elaborate carelessness!" Marybelle whispered to Sara. "I believe he wants it read."

"He's certainly taking pains to pretend it's not the least bit important," Sara agreed. "Instead of burning it I'll just slip it in my dress, and we'll read it when we are alone in my room. There can't be anything wrong in that when he gives us such full permission."

So when Grace wasn't looking Sara walked past the table and picked up the note she had brought to Carl and thrust it hastily into her bodice. Because of that peculiar seal on the back she was very curious to read it and because of the careless words Carl had called over the banisters she felt justified in appropriating it. And he would think somebody had thrown it in the fire and never look for it or miss it.

Between the four o'clock dinner and eight o'clock tea the girls had the time to themselves and stole away to Sara's little back room upstairs to read the note. It was cold up there, for there had been no fire in the room all day, and they put on their cloaks and wrapped a blanket around their feet as they sat on the edge of the bed with a candle burning on a small stand beside them. Sara drew out the paper she had concealed during dinner and they bent their heads over it in the flickering light. This is what they read:

DEAR RECHBERG:

Remember we miss you Even while we Praise your good luck in finding such a delightful place to board. Ordinarily this tavern is Remarkably comfortable but it is True that when politicians come in the door comfort flies Out the window and flies Fast. Therefore we do not blame you for leaving us but Entreat you Not to forget us.

Your friends,

F. G.
I. K.

"I wonder why anybody wasted ink writing that?" Marybelle marveled. "When Carl said it was nothing he certainly spoke the truth. Even if the initials signed to it are those of your mysterious Spaniard and Russian the note is quite innocent."

Sara nodded, feeling disconcerted. It was not what she had hoped for. And yet, if the note had not been innocent—on the surface—Carl would never have left it lying around for anybody to read. She held it there in the candlelight and studied it for a long time while Marybelle wriggled out of the blanket which had bound her legs and wandered about the room to look at various possessions of Sara's which she had not noticed on her other visit.

"Marybelle," Sara said presently, "what does R-E spell?"

"Nothing," replied the surprised Marybelle.

"What does R-E-P spell?"

"Nothing either, as far as I know."

"What does R-E-P-O spell?"

"Sara, are you crazy?" her friend demanded.

"No, I'm trying to understand why all these capital letters are scattered about in the body of this note the way they are," Sara explained.

"Oh, people often use capitals for the important words in a sentence," Marybelle reminded her, "though not as much now as formerly. My mother has a diary that her grandmother kept in her girlhood and there are half a dozen capitals in every sentence, not counting those at the beginning."

"What does R-E-P-O-R spell?" Sara went on as if she hadn't heard.

"Nothing in the English language. It may spell something in Egyptian," was Marybelle's lofty comment.

"What does R-E-P-O-R-T spell?" Sara persisted.

"Why, that spells *Report,*" Marybelle admitted.

"And the other capital letters are O-F-T-E-N," Sara stated. "So we can make two words out of them—'Report Often.' What do you think of that as a coincidence?"

Marybelle came and took the paper into her own hands. Sure enough, the capital letters in the body of the note—excluding the salutation and conclusion—were REPORTOFTEN and Sara's method of beginning with two letters and adding others one by one until she had a word had given them meaning. Either the meaning was REPORT OFTEN or REPORT OF TEN but the former seemed the more likely. The girls looked at each other with startled eyes for it couldn't be accidental. It was a

hidden message in what had seemed an innocent note.

"Now I'm convinced that Carl Rechberg is a spy," said Marybelle after a silent interval. "But what can he be after in this house?"

"That's what we'll have to find out," said Sara, wondering herself.

CHAPTER VIII

CARL ACTS QUEERLY

THE next day was Saturday and a holiday from school but Marybelle had to go away early just the same to take a music lesson.

"You needn't lament and beat your breast, Sara," she told her chum gloomily, "because it won't help matters any. I've got to go."

"I am not lamenting," Sara protested with the opposite emotion in her face.

"Well, if you are not you ought to be because if it wasn't for that silly old music lesson you and I could spend this whole lovely day together."

"We can spend Monday together," Sara comforted her. "My sisters are going to have a nutting party and picnic for Carl on Monday if this pretty weather continues and you must come with us. You know it's Mistress Pickering's father's birthday and she always spends it with him in Georgetown, so that we don't have to go back to school until Tuesday."

"As if I had forgotten that!" Marybelle exclaimed indignantly. "It's an insult to remind me of that extra holiday for it implies that you think I am losing my mind. But to be very, very serious, Sara," she added in another tone, "there is some-

thing you must promise me before I leave this morning. You must promise to tell your father at once that you suspect Carl Rechberg of being in league with that Spaniard and Russian whom you are sure were the highwaymen who held you up on your trip to Washington. Make him listen to you this time because he's got to know."

"I will," Sara promised earnestly.

When Marybelle was gone she sought her father in the upstairs room which he used as his study. The Senator was surprised to see her come in and close the door and take a seat beside him as if she had something very important to say, but he listened with at least one ear to what she told him.

"It's certainly a curious idea you have, daughter," he said when she had finished. "But you haven't much to found it on, have you? You think you recognized the two masked men who held us up as two foreigners who were at the inn we had left, and you think Carl is connected with them somehow because he has an emblem on his watch-fob similar to one they each wear. That is all possible but by no means proved."

"How about the note with the hidden message?" Sara asked, for she had shown it to him.

"A bit odd, I admit, but maybe not what you think. I like young Rechberg, and I won't believe any evil of him without good reason. The Austrian minister vouches for him and says he is the son of a well-known nobleman in Vienna. So run along, honey, and don't think about such things any more."

"But, Father, if you have important papers in the house—"

"I haven't," he assured her. "There is not a thing in the house that Carl may not copy for all I care, supposing he is the least bit interested in my affairs. So you see, my dear, you are worrying about nothing. By the way, Sara, how old were you at the time of our last big war—the War of 1812? You can't remember it, can you?"

"Why, yes, sir, I was five years old in August, 1814, when the British burned Washington," she reminded him. "I remember seeing the blackened remains of the Capitol and the President's House when we came here in the fall. Everybody was talking about how Mrs. Madison had had to flee from the city and had come back forty-eight hours later to find the Executive Mansion a smoldering ruin and the Capitol little better. Quentin told me how the British Admiral was reported to have walked into the hall of Congress and had sprung into the Speaker's chair and shouted, 'Shall this harbor of Yankee democracy be burned? All for it, say "Aye." The ayes have it. Light up!' And all over town other buildings were set on fire, Quentin said. And then I remember how gay it was that winter to celebrate the peace. Mother was always going to parties at the Octagon House where President and Mrs. Madison were living while the Executive Mansion was being rebuilt and everybody was giving fêtes because of the Treaty of Ghent."

"Well, you do remember about it, don't you?"

the Senator smiled. "Now I see why you are so fearful of foreigners—you think we may have more wars. But set your mind at ease, my dear, for I think we have taught all other nations to thoroughly respect us now. I believe the nations of Europe would dislike very much to get into a war with us since we have shown that we can beat mighty England twice. Between you and me I think Austria, Spain, and Russia (to mention the countries you seem to suspect) are more anxious to *avoid* any trouble with our country than to force it upon us. So don't imagine foolish things. I'm afraid you've been picturing the Moreland family fleeing from Washington in the near future as Dolly Madison had to do nine years ago."

Sara laughed with him and agreed that perhaps those memories of her babyhood had made her a little too suspicious of foreigners. It was certainly comforting to hear her father say that Europe might be getting a little afraid of the United States and anxious to avoid trouble with her instead of starting it. She left his study then because he himself was leaving the room and because she realized it was useless to try to impress him with her information. If it had been Quentin or Grace who came to him with such a story he would have paid more attention to it, but from Sara it seemed rather like a joke and Sara understood that perfectly. She decided that she and Marybelle might as well keep their suspicions to themselves in the future.

In the rear upper hall Sara found her mother

and sisters hard at work, for Saturdays were cleaning days and Mrs. Moreland prided herself on her housekeeping. Also she was determined to make good housekeepers of her daughters.

"I'd rather do anything than unpack a trunk," Louise was saying in a perverse tone as Sara came upon them. For Louise hated the weekly cleaning day and hadn't much ambition to be a good housekeeper.

"Ten minutes ago I heard you say you'd rather do anything than turn the mattresses on a bed," her mother reminded her. "And last night you said you'd rather do anything than sew. It seems to me, young lady, that you'd rather do anything than what you happen to be doing at the moment."

"Oh, no, Mother! Not if I'm dancing!" the girl protested with a dimple in each cheek.

"Then dance upstairs with those dresses you have there and put them in a chest in the attic," Mrs. Moreland directed.

Louise wailed at this. "Oh, Mother, I'm afraid to go up in the attic alone since you saw the ghost up there. Truly I am!"

"The ghost has never appeared in the broad daylight, and even if it did you would have less reason to be afraid of it than of me if you don't do as I tell you. Fly!"

Louise flew. Sixteen years' experience had taught her that her mother meant what she said.

"Now then, Grace," went on the energetic lady, turning to her eldest daughter, "if you are through

looking in that mirror you can put these clean curtains on the rods and have them ready to hang."

"I wasn't looking *in* this mirror, Mother; I was looking *at* it," Grace explained in a tone of dignified offense. "It's one of the hand mirrors Mrs. Monroe had made from the fragments of the big looking-glasses in the Executive Mansion that were broken by the British in the war. Do look at it yourself; it's lovely!"

Mrs. Moreland said she did not have time to examine it then, but Ed came through the hall at the moment and taking the glass from his sister peered into its depths with his nose wrinkled up and his underlip thrust out.

"I don't see anything to admire in it," he announced.

"No, poor dear, you couldn't see anything to admire in a mirror," his sister agreed sympathetically.

"I think it's a handsome thing, very!" laughed tall Quentin, coming up behind his younger brother and looking over his shoulder into the clear depths of the glass.

"I'm glad you two boys happened along," said Mrs. Moreland. "Just take this empty trunk between you and carry it to the attic. But be sure to make a noise so that Louise won't think you are the ghost. Now then, who is that over there? Sara—"

Sara sighed as she heard her name spoken. She had been trying to steal softly past her mother without being seen.

"Sara, take these books to your father in his study," Mrs. Moreland directed, pointing to some volumes she had removed from the bottom of the trunk. "He was looking for them this morning but had forgotten where they were packed."

"Father has gone out," Sara said as she took the books on her arm.

"Then just leave them on his desk. And while you are there dust the room good. It's so seldom that one gets a chance at that room."

The Senator's study, which Sara had so recently left, was in the front half of the big house, and to reach it she had to go up two steps and through a door and cross a lateral corridor and round an irregularity in the front hall so that she entered the room with the unexpectedness of a jack popping out of a box. And in the room was Carl Rechberg standing beside the Senator's block front bureau desk and touching it here and there with exploring fingers as if trying to find some opening that was not locked. When he saw Sara enter he gave a guilty start.

"I hope you don't mind my coming in here?" he said to her with a smile. "I was—ah—examining this secretary. The inlay is very beautiful. A Sheraton, isn't it? Or is it a Heppelwhite?"

"I don't know. It looks like just an ordinary desk to me," Sara commented drily.

"Not so very ordinary, I assure you. There is much fine furniture in this house. I have examined several pieces this morning and found them admirable work

of walnut, oak, and mahogany, beautifully inlaid and veneered."

"I know nothing about the furniture," said Sara, very coldly. "It's not ours. We rent it with the house. All of it belongs to the estate of the late Major Burton."

"This chair," went on Carl, as if he hadn't heard her, "is a Jacobean wainscot chair and was probably made in 1600, though it goes well with the secretary which is of a much later period, I imagine. I wonder if your mother would object to my looking in the other rooms on this floor and examining the furniture?"

"You might ask her," said Sara still more coldly.

Carl began to redden at her tone. "By the way, what room is this?" he asked uncomfortably.

"It's my father's study, where he keeps his books and papers and does much of his work. That desk you were examining is full of his papers. You may have noticed that he keeps it locked."

"Sorry I blundered in. It seemed to be just an upstairs sitting room and I did not know the desk was in use when I tried to open it."

He seemed discomfited by the forbidding expression in Sara's wide gray eyes and though he laughed a little hurriedly went out. What an irritating, unmannered child she was, he told himself as he ran downstairs. He was sure no other member of the family would have regarded him with such cold distrust on finding him in that room. Grace or

Louise or the boys would have seen nothing at all amiss in his being there.

"Now what could he have wanted in here?" Sara wondered as she dusted the desk in which he had seemed so interested. "I daresay the furniture in this house really is old and handsome but was Mr. Carl Rechberg interested in the *make* of the furniture or in the *contents* of it? That's what I'd like to know! Pretending to admire old furniture is a fine excuse to search for something."

Carl did not continue his examination of the furniture in the house. The recollection of the distrust and what amounted to dislike in Sara's face lingered with him and discouraged any further prowling about the place. In one of the lower rooms he encountered Grace directing the hanging of fresh curtains, and he could not resist a word with her about Sara.

"You have a quaint little sister," he said to her in what he tried to make an amused tone.

"Do you really think Louise is quaint?" Grace asked, wondering whether this was a compliment to be suppressed or a criticism to be repeated. Grace and Louise had just had a tiff, and at such times they did not cater to one another's vanity.

"I wasn't referring to Miss Louise but to your other sister," he explained.

It took Grace half a minute to remember that she had another sister.

"Oh, you mean Sara? Yes, she's certainly a queer little thing but she's only a child."

"Would you mind telling me her exact age?" he questioned with an interest which she could not understand. Indeed, he hardly understood it himself.

"Let me think!" she half laughed. "Quentin is nineteen and I'm eighteen and Ed is seventeen and Louise is sixteen so it seems as if Sara ought to be fifteen. But I don't think she's quite that old. I believe she is two years younger than Louise."

Carl tried to put the thought of Sara out of his mind. She was only a child and appeared to have so little self-assertion that her lively, selfish family paid little attention to her. All the others liked him and he would not let himself be disturbed by this one girl's look of persistent mistrust.

Roaming out of doors he came upon Miss Julia with a basket on her arm and a small pair of scissors in hand. She wore a very large sun-hat and seemed to be starting somewhere alone. Though Carl was always scrupulously polite he outdid himself now in urging her to let him attend her and carry the basket.

"I am only going to that little wood over yonder to cut some autumn leaves for the house," she told him laughingly.

"I can be of help in that I'm sure," he insisted. "Those small scissors are very well to cut flowers in a garden, but my knife will be of more use in the woods. And I can pull down the branches for you and—ah—protect you from wild animals."

She laughed again. "Come then! I will pretend that I am afraid of bobcats in order to have the pleasure of your company."

And as they walked along together, he carrying the empty basket and assisting her over roots and rocks, she went on: "There is one thing about court life in aristocratic old countries like Austria that I heartily approve, and that is the charmingly mannered young men and women it produces. Though, alas, there are exceptions to that, too!"

"You are thinking of an exception now. May I know what recollection caused you to sigh?" Carl asked with his nicest smile.

"I was thinking of a young soldier who left me alone and lost in the great Hofburg Palace the night I attended a court ball," she admitted. "He was summoned by his commanding officer, and he just dropped me like a hot stone and hurried away and never returned."

"Tell me about that. I've been wishing to hear more of your visit to Vienna. What did you do when you were marooned like that in a great palace?"

Miss Julia was always ready to talk about her trip, and the unfeigned interest in the young Austrian's face delighted her and moved her to speak at length. She described her adventure in the Hofburg as she had described it to the young Morelands, and he laughed with her as she pictured herself sitting by the fire in the Emperor's cabinet and taking papers from the wastebasket to put in her damp slippers.

"I am sure you have preserved those slippers as souvenirs of that interesting evening?" Carl ques-

tioned mirthfully. "And very likely framed the papers you so calmly appropriated?"

"I left the papers in the slippers and gave them to my little niece, Sara," Miss Julia explained, wiping the laughter tears from her eyes.

"Sara?" Carl repeated blankly.

"Why, yes! What made you say that so queerly?"

"Only because she is so young. I should think you would have given the silver slippers to Miss Grace or Miss Louise who could have worn them to a ball."

"Sara will go to balls some day, too. I gave her the pretty slippers because I had already given Grace and Louise more than their fair share of presents and Sara less than hers. She is a hoarding little soul and has wrapped up the slippers carefully and put them in her treasure box which she keeps full of pretty trifles on the top shelf of her wardrobe. I could not have given them into better hands. Every family should have one dependable member to guard its heirlooms, and I think only Sara could qualify in the Moreland family."

During the rest of the walk Carl was a little silent and thoughtful and by his absent-mindedness almost forfeited Miss Julia's good opinion of his manners, but on the whole she thought him a charming young man.

CHAPTER IX

A DRIVE AND A TALK

"CARL," said Senator Moreland at the breakfast table next morning, "if you were setting out on a short trip of three miles or so on a bright autumn day with the warmth of Indian summer in the air, would you prefer to ride on horseback or to drive with a pretty girl in a shay?"

Carl decided that gallantry rather than honesty was the best policy, and he answered promptly that he would rather drive with the girl in the shay.

"Very well, you may have your choice. In my stable are three saddle horses and a carriage and a borrowed shay. The carriage has only one seat inside, but upon it three ladies can sit if they do not mind a little crowding. There is also a hassock in the carriage on which a very young person can be seated. My wife, my sister, and two of my daughters can therefore ride in the carriage. Before my sister joined our party on her return from Europe all the female members of my family could travel in the carriage and did on the trip to Washington. But now they are one too many to be comfortably conveyed that way. Hence, the borrowed shay. So you either ride the horse of one of my sons and he drives with one of his sisters or else,

as I have already said, you drive in the shay. You must choose as you please."

"Again I choose the shay," Carl assured him.

"Good! And now choose the girl," the jovial father instructed him. "Shall it be Grace or Louise?"

The two young ladies thus named laughed and blushed and looked demurely at their plates, but in their hearts a quick jealousy began to glow. Grace felt that she could not endure the slight if her younger sister was preferred by their aristocratic boarder, whereas Louise saw no reason why her elder sister should be favored before herself when they were so near of an age. Mrs. Moreland and Miss Julia glanced at each other in distress. They feared there was going to be friction between the sisters whichever choice Carl made.

The young Austrian did not hesitate a moment over this delicate situation. He knew his own mind very well it seemed.

"If Miss Sara will accompany me," he said politely, "I shall be highly honored."

Everybody at the table was taken aback.

"Sara?" questioned Senator Moreland, astonished.

"If she will do me the honor," Carl repeated.

Grace and Louise were too surprised to be offended and Mrs. Moreland and Miss Julia were relieved. The two ladies thought Carl had chosen as he did in an effort at compromise and they approved it. But behind the smile in Carl's eyes there

was something enigmatic. A shrewd observer might well have wondered what had influenced his choice.

"Oh dear!" mourned Louise. "Carl, how horrid of you! Now I shall have to sit on that little old hassock in the carriage, and I had made a vow I would never travel that way again."

Sara was more surprised and disconcerted over her selection than her sisters and not at all pleased. She had no wish to be Carl's sole companion on a drive across the city, and while she was dressing she protested to her mother with a vehemence that went almost to tears that she didn't want to go. But her mother begged her to be sensible and reminded her that it was probably the only way to keep the peace between her sisters. Grace thought every favor should be hers because she was the eldest daughter and Louise resented it more than was reasonable; accordingly, either would be hurt if the other were preferred. But they would not be jealous of a child like herself and since it was Carl who had suggested this compromise she must submit to it. Surely she could sit quietly beside him on a short drive and reply civilly to anything he said to her, and that was all that was required of her.

The Moreland cavalcade set out with three unsmiling faces in the party and all of these young and feminine. Grace and Louise rode away in the carriage with their mother and aunt in a resigned but not a contented frame of mind while Sara was seething with rebellion as she was assisted to the seat beside Carl in the shay. The road was so nar-

row and bad that there was no room for the horsemen to keep beside the vehicle, and it was thought safer for the Senator and his sons to ride on ahead of the conveyance for fear of crowding it into a ditch. This left Carl and Sara to bring up the rear all alone. Had there been such a thing as a kodak in existence and any one to snap it as they went by, a quaint picture would have resulted. The fat horse ambled along between the shafts of an open-faced vehicle with a movable top which, in later times, was to be called a "buggy," and on the single seat sat a good-looking young man in a coat with three capes and a high beaver hat, side by side with a prim little girl in a high-necked, brown pelisse and small but flaring bonnet tied down with a ribbon and ornamented with a plume. The young man was smiling; the young lady was not.

"The others have all deserted us so we must entertain ourselves, it seems," Carl remarked as soon as they were fairly off. For he meant to make the most of the drive for a reason of his own.

"I don't want to talk," Sara told him, not at all in a rude tone but just to assure him that he needn't bother to entertain her.

"Then I shall be forced to converse with myself," he sighed, and began at once to address himself by name: "It's a fine day, Carl! Why do you look so downcast? You say it's because Sara Moreland doesn't like you? But why doesn't she like you? What have you done to offend her? You say she distrusts you? But what is the reason for that?

Surely a sensible girl like Sara wouldn't distrust and dislike a perfectly nice young man of whom all her family approve without a reason for it? You can think of no reason, you say? Then it must be because she doesn't like the color of your eyes or the cut of your clothes or—"

"Or the emblem you wear on your watch-fob," Sara put in quickly.

The teasing expression on Carl's face disappeared, and he looked so startled that Sara thought it very clever of herself to take him by surprise like that. In a few seconds he had regained his composure and begun to laugh, but she was not to forget the effect she had achieved for that one moment.

"The emblem on my watch-fob?" he repeated. "But I'm not wearing a watch-charm of any description!"

"No, not now but you were the day on which you came to our house," she reminded him. "You let me look at it that night."

"And what do you know about that emblem, Sara? You interest me."

She decided that she might as well tell him everything, now that she had told him that much. Perhaps she would surprise another guilty look on his face.

"I had seen it twice on that same day before I saw it on your watch-charm," she explained. "I found a pin in the road as I was walking home from school that afternoon and a big red-headed man came rushing up and claimed it. I told him he

would have to describe the design on it before I would give it to him, and then a little dark man came up and showed me a ring he wore with the same design on it. When I reached home I found you there and on your watch-charm was the same emblem. So I decided that all three of you belonged to a society of some sort, perhaps a secret society."

"Well, why not?" Carl smilingly expostulated. "There is no harm in belonging to a society, even a secret society. There are many which are quite innocent."

"I haven't told you everything yet. You see, I had met those two men before!"

"Is that so? Well, go on! I am listening attentively."

"The first night we spent on the road on our journey to Washington this year, those men were at the tavern where we stopped," Sara continued. "They talked a great deal about politics with the other men in the inn because I overheard them. They said they wanted to know what the average citizen of North America thought about South American affairs. Then one of them asked the landlady who my father was and afterwards I saw them looking at Father very queerly. Late the next afternoon we were held up by two masked men and Father was robbed of his money box in which he also kept his official papers. The box was returned later but the seals of all the papers had been broken. And I am quite sure I recognized the highwaymen as those two foreigners at the inn. I believe they

wanted to know what members of Congress as well as average citizens thought about politics."

"You think these two men are foreign spies?" Carl asked, still smiling and trying not to show that he felt uncomfortable.

"My brother Quentin said one was a Spaniard and one a Russian and so it seemed probable," Sara insisted.

"But I'm an Austrian," he reminded her.

"Just the same you all three wear the same emblem."

"And you think that because I wear an emblem like that which those men were wearing I may be a foreign spy, likewise?" Carl questioned. "You think that all three of us belong to some political organization that is inimical to the United States and that I came to board in your house in order to carry on this work? You think I am trying to learn something from your father's papers? This is why you distrust me?"

"I found you in father's study yesterday trying to open his desk," she reminded him. "You said you were just interested in the old furniture but—"

"But you didn't believe a word of it, eh?" Carl laughed. "Sara, this is delightful!"

She was silent. There was more she might have told him. She might have reminded him of the seal on the letter she had brought him Friday afternoon and told him of the hidden message she had found in the note—those significant words REPORT OFTEN—but she thought she had already told

too much. She decided to keep the rest to herself.

"I assure you I was only admiring the furniture in your father's study yesterday," he earnestly protested. "And many innocent people all over the world are wearing that emblem you saw on my watch-fob."

She made no answer.

"Have you told anybody else that you suspect me of being a foreign spy in your house?" he persisted laughingly.

"I told Father, but you'll probably be glad to know that he took it as a joke."

"If he hadn't I'd have to find another place to board," the boy laughed again, "and I wouldn't like that because I'm so comfortable at your house."

"Well, he didn't agree with me at all. He said I was just suspicious of all foreigners because I remember the War of 1812 and the burning of Washington. I was very little at the time but I suppose it did make a big impression on me. And another thing my father said—"

"Yes?" he prompted her as she paused.

"He said he thought the nations of Europe respected our prowess too much now to want to get into any trouble with us. He said they wouldn't want to do anything to start a war with us, and so I needn't be afraid of Washington being burned again."

"Well, let's leave it at that for the present. I can give you my word of honor that I'm not after any American state papers nor trying to pry into your

father's affairs. And I agree with him that Europe does not want to get into trouble with the United States."

They had now turned into Pennsylvania Avenue and were passing a handsome white building with wooden palings enclosing a garden in front and a desolate reach of uncultivated ground running down to the river behind. In the garden where late flowers were still in bloom a tall spare man walked about and prodded absently into the beds with a cane.

"That's the President's house and the man in the yard is Colonel Monroe," Sara told Carl and he was glad of the change of subject. "Father will take you to call on him any time you like," she added.

"Is the President as easy to meet as that?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, though the Monroes keep more to themselves than the Madisons did. Mrs. Dolly Madison used to call promptly on everybody who came to Washington, but Mrs. Monroe won't do that. It made society awfully mad at first, and they wouldn't go to her drawing-rooms and levees. But that feeling has worn off now, Mother says. Everybody realizes that Mrs. Monroe simply isn't strong enough to go around visiting everybody as Mrs. Madison did. Mrs. Madison didn't like to do it either, but because it was the custom she kept it up as long as her husband was in office."

"Well, it was a custom which would surely have had to be discontinued eventually," Carl suggested

smilingly. "Mrs. Monroe was wise to give it over. As the city grew the task would have been simply prodigious."

Sara nodded. "Do you think Washington is a funny city?" she asked after a moment's silence. "Lots of foreigners do, not only because it's so straggly and swampy and has such awful streets but because fine buildings and flimsy frame houses are all mixed up together."

"But the fine buildings are all very fine indeed and the flimsy houses are just temporary makeshifts until other fine buildings can be put up," he reminded her. "I don't think the city is funny at all but very interesting. If you had seen Washington in 1809, you'd realize how rapidly it is growing now."

Sara was a little puzzled by this remark of Carl's. It sounded more like something she should have said to him than he to her. But she was pleased to have him like Washington.

"Of course, I don't remember 1809," she said, "because that's the year I was born. But Aunt Julia says the city has grown very noticeably in just the three years she was abroad."

As they drove down the main avenue of the city where four rows of poplar trees gave shade and dignity to what would otherwise have been a mere country road, they could see the Capitol at the other end of the vista and they passed or were passed by many other equipages or horsemen going to or from it.

"Tell me who some of these people are?" Carl

requested his young companion. "For I'll lay a wager you know everybody in town."

Sara was flattered by this remark and very willing to point out the prominent people they passed. One man who went by on horseback was very tall and slender with upstanding reddish hair and keen eyes which seemed to see everything. Sara touched Carl's arm and pointed to this man with eager haste lest he miss seeing him.

"That's General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee," she whispered excitedly. "He's in the Senate this year but he's famous as a military hero. He won the great Battle of New Orleans against the British in 1815 and he has won wars against the Indians and Spaniards and was the military governor of Florida just after we bought it from Spain. He's a very interesting man with lots of energy but a high temper. My father is sure he'll be President some day."

Carl turned to look after General Jackson. Even in Austria he had heard of him.

"And yonder," went on Sara, touching Carl's arm again, "is Mr. John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, who is Secretary of State. He is the son of ex-President John Adams. His home here in Washington is almost as much a social center as the President's house. He's a candidate for President next year, too. That man with him is another celebrated statesman, Mr. Henry Clay. He has also got his eye on the Presidency. At present he's the Speaker of the House of Representatives and leader of the

Whig party. He's a Kentuckian and a brilliant man and a great orator, but my father doesn't think he'll ever be President."

"You seem to be conversant with politics," Carl teased her.

"I don't know whether I am or not because I don't know what conversant means," she retorted. "But look, that tall, slender man with the grave face is the Secretary of War, Mr. John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. He's a strenuous defender of slavery, which some people would like to abolish. And there! That big man with the fine head and black hair—see him, dressed in buff and blue?—that's Mr. Daniel Webster. He's a member of Congress and is becoming very famous as an orator. And the man riding by on the big horse who looks like an Indian is Mr. John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia. He is descended from Pocahontas and is a very strange, sarcastic sort of a man. He doesn't like anybody, and nobody likes him. But he's very clever and interesting."

"So many great people all around that I can hardly turn my head fast enough to see them," Carl sighed. "Well, any more?"

Sara could see no more at the moment but kept her attention alert and presently she was greatly rewarded.

"Oh," she cried, "I may be mistaken but I *think* that tall, thin man who stands so straight on the porch of that house yonder is Mr. Thomas Jefferson. I didn't know he was in town, but it looks like him

and the people who live in that house are great friends of his."

Carl drew his horse to a walk and looked with keen interest at the man on the porch.

"So that is Jefferson!" he mused aloud. "He was President when—I mean, I've heard of him. My mother has told me about him. She was disgusted with him because he rode to his inauguration on horseback instead of in a coach and six and because he always wore such plain clothes while President and hated titles of every sort except Mister."

"Does your mother know Jefferson?" Sara asked in surprise.

"She knows of him. I suppose everybody in civilized countries has heard of Thomas Jefferson. And my mother is an aristocrat in her principles and doesn't like Jefferson's politics."

"And of course you feel the same way," Sara stated, as if that went without saying.

"Indeed? Does it follow as a matter of course that a son should think like his mother? But politics is a rather heavy subject, and we seem to have talked enough along that line for the present. Is this imposing building we are approaching the national Capitol?"

"Yes. Drive around all that rubbish, and draw up over yonder where the rest of our party has stopped. You'll have to watch closely because the Capitol isn't near finished and there's an awful clutter of stones and lumber around here."

Carl guided the horse through the débris without

mishap, and as they drew up under some trees Ed ran to catch the horse's bridle and hitch him. Mrs. Moreland, Miss Julia, and Sara's sisters had just alighted from the Moreland carriage and were putting each other's toilettes to rights. All around were other equipages and other parties getting out or alighting from saddle horses. The bright autumn sun shone down on a large gathering of men in high beavers and ladies in empire dresses and plumed bonnets making their way along the stepping-stones toward the entrance of the House of Representatives.

"We are taking you to church services, Carl," Senator Moreland told the young Austrian as he came to the side of the shay to help Sara out. "Union services are frequently held here at the Capitol with preachers of the different denominations taking turn in officiating. An excellent preacher from Baltimore is here to-day and I think you will enjoy his sermon *if* you can hear it. The acoustic properties of our Hall of Representatives are peculiar in the extreme."

It was the weird acoustics of this old Hall of Representatives of 1823 which was to put Sara in possession of some strange and exciting information before that morning was over.

CHAPTER X

SARA OVERHEARS A PLOT

THE Moreland party was late in arriving at the Capitol and could not all find seats together on the floor of the hall. They might have gone into the gallery which extended all around the great semicircle, but as the crowd was not large this Sunday morning they would have been alone up there and too conspicuous. So they scattered around wherever they could find seats, and Sara had to be content with a place against the wall behind her parents in a sort of niche. But as she knew Marybelle had gone to St. John's and there was no hope of seeing her here she really didn't care where she was placed. A whole morning without Marybelle would be dreary at best.

If the Morelands were late in reaching the Capitol at least the man who was to preach was even later and there was a long delay in beginning the service. In her inconspicuous corner Sara passed the time by looking about her at what she could see. She looked upward at the painted ceiling which was believed by everybody perfectly to reproduce the Pantheon at Rome, the light coming down through a glass cupola, and marveled over the really wonderful bronze gilt chandelier which hung down from

the center of this cupola to within a few feet of the floor. She had never seen it with its candles lighted but imagined it must be quite gorgeous. The big room—it was ninety feet long, she had heard her father say—gave the appearance of being decorated for a fête because of the bright-colored woolen curtains hanging down from the gallery rail and between the pillars there in the vain hope of improving the acoustics of the room. The Speaker's chair, which Sara had to twist around to see, was overhung with a canopy of crimson silk which was caught back in such voluminous folds that the last time Congress was in session and Sara had accompanied her mother into the gallery to hear a speech she had been able only to see Mr. Clay's legs as he presided over the House. That had been during the long session of Congress two years ago. The newly elected eighteenth Congress would not convene until December, but already many members had arrived in the city and the room was pretty well filled with them and their families, toward whom Sara's attention was attracted when the decorations had been inspected.

"Oh, I am so hot!" murmured a fashionably dressed young lady on Sara's other side—the side that wasn't against the wall. "The heating system in this room is amazingly uncomfortable. Why could not they have had fireplaces in here as in the Senate Chamber instead of these disagreeable hot air registers?"

Her escort tried to explain the superiority of central heating over the open fireplace, reminding her

that the august Senators got very cold in winter unless they left their seats and crowded around the fires, but the young lady just as strongly urged the beauty of leaping flames and the honest simplicity of open hearths. Sara soon ceased to listen to them, and after regarding several other strangers and finding nothing particular to hold her interest she fixed her attention on the great marble clock, representing the Muse of History in the winged chariot of Time, which was over the main doorway opposite the Speaker's chair. It was well past the hour at which the service was to have begun and still the minister had not arrived and no one even thought of starting a song. Instead the congregation seemed very well content to chat with their friends. Many people were in the gathering who might not have been drawn to church services anywhere else but had been lured by curiosity to join the congregation at the Capitol and were not sorry for the social hour unexpectedly enforced.

Sara leaned her head against the wall beside the pillar which shut off so much of her view and closed her eyes. She thought she would probably go to sleep unless something happened soon. Meanwhile she mused upon her conversation with Carl on that long drive across the city. She found she liked him better now than she had before. Perhaps she had been wrong to mistrust him. Perhaps there was no reason for it. Even that queer note might be explained.

Then, with a start, she heard his voice. The sound

was distinct and came from around the pillar against which she had been leaning. But when she looked he was not visible anywhere and until she leaned her head against the wall and the pillar again—at the point where they touched—she could hear nothing. But at that one spot the distinct whisper came again, only this time it was somebody else speaking and calling Carl by name. Sara realized that here was one of those tricks of acoustics which were so numerous in this auditorium. Words which could not be heard three feet from a speaker's side were often clearly audible all the way across the room to any one leaning against the wall at a certain spot. Not with any thought of eavesdropping but merely because it was so funny Sara listened.

"So we meet again, Rechberg!" said a voice with a foreign accent. "By the way, do you speak Spanish? No? Then we will have to converse in English as my German is poor, but I'm sure no one can hear us in this corner. Tell me, have you located that paper yet?"

"I know that it is in the Moreland house all right," Carl answered. "I think I even know the room in which it is kept. I might go further and say that I know what object of furniture contains it. But I have not yet set eyes upon it."

"If you know the room where it is kept and the cabinet which contains it, I should think the acquisition of the paper would be a simple matter. You have only to seize an opportunity to search."

"But, Señor Godoy, I am a gentleman. I cannot

invade a private chamber and open—shall I say a wardrobe or a chest of drawers?—in a house in which I am a trusted guest. I admit I have done some prowling in the Moreland home but I have done no prying. I cannot stoop to that."

"Phrut! One cannot be a spy and a gentleman at the same time. Or rather, when a man is serving his country the small conventions of everyday life amount to nothing. They are nullified. That paper must be secured at once. If you are not willing to search the Moreland house for it, another must. Just tell me where you think it can be found and when you think a burglary can be stage-managed with as little inconvenience as possible to both the Moreland household and the burglar, and I will attend to the rest. Is it probable that the family will be away from home any time soon?"

There was a long silence on Carl's part while Sara held her breath and pressed her head closer against the pillar. She was afraid they had moved away from the place which somehow conveyed their voices along the wall to her ear when no one else could catch a word, but presently there came a sort of resigned sigh, perhaps the audible accompaniment of a shrug, and then Carl's voice again.

"Yes, I suppose you are right. The paper must be secured at all events but some one else had better be the actual thief. I am sure I would bungle it somehow if I tried it. So I will just be the inside accomplice. The Moreland family are all going nutting to-morrow—I believe it is a picnic in my

honor—and the servants will go along too to attend to the lunch. I will see to it that the side door is left unlocked when we set off. Will you or Kurbski be the invader?"

"Neither. We have other agents in Washington, and it is better to send one of them in case there is a hitch in our plan and the housebreaker is caught. Kurbski and I are of too much importance in the game to risk ourselves unnecessarily. But tell me where you think the paper is to be found? In what room? In what article of furniture?"

Again Sara listened breathlessly for an answer, but no other sound came. The speakers must have stepped aside or changed their position or in some other way broken the odd connection which had transferred their voices across space. She did not know where they were for she could not see them anywhere, but she was certain that Carl's companion was the Spaniard who wore the significant emblem and she had now learned that his name was Godoy and that the Russian was named Kurbski. This corresponded with the initials on the code note. But what was it they were after? Assuredly it must be some state paper of her father's, and therefore Carl's pledged word of honor that he was seeking nothing of the sort was quite worthless. But if only she had been able to learn exactly what and exactly where it was! However, she had learned the day for which the burglary was set and that was a great deal. The question which now concerned her was what she was going to do with her information.

"Carl is a spy after all," she mused. "I just vaguely suspected it before but now I know it. And only this morning I had begun to like and trust him! I wonder if Father would believe me if I told him what I overheard at this whispering post? I've already warned him that Carl might be after some of his papers and he only laughed and said he didn't have anything important in the house. Carl and that Spaniard must think something is in the house that isn't there at all."

Sara looked very quiet and demure as she sat there in her corner against the wall, but she was thinking harder than she had ever thought before and any one reading her mind would have found the wild ideas within it out of all keeping with her appearance. Her heart was beating fast under her short-waisted dress, and her hands were cold in spite of the billows of hot air from the furnace which were aggravating all the old-fashioned fire lovers in the room. The preacher of the day arrived at last and the sermon and service were gone through with, but Sara had only the vaguest notion of what she heard. She was thinking about that burglary which was to take place next day at her own house and of Carl's treachery and of Spaniards and Russians and international secret societies. In her imagination this beautiful Capitol building was already in flames for the second time in its history as she anticipated another great war.

"But," she reminded herself at this stage in her imaginings, "Father said the nations of Europe have

come to respect the United States since the last war and that they do not want to get into trouble with us. So what can the paper be that Carl and the Spaniard and the Russian are after? What do they want it *for?*"

The congregation began to break up and because of the long wait before the service the people streamed out of the hall much faster than they otherwise might have done. Sara was remembered and annexed by her parents, who then went about gathering up the rest of their party. Miss Julia and Louise came forth from a curtained window seat, Grace and Quentin had been sitting together at the end of a distant row of chairs and threaded their way through the crowd at their mother's beckoning gesture, Ed was found and waked up in a corner behind a Congressman's desk, and at the door they encountered Carl all alone and pleasantly smiling. Sara could hardly force herself to nod to him.

"You are to ride Ed's horse home, Carl," Senator Moreland told the boy when they were all outside, for he did not intend to impose on his guest's good nature to the extent of again seeing him drive off with a mere child like Sara. "Ed will drive Sara in the shay. I'm sure you two talked out on the drive in and would have nothing to say on a return trip together."

Sara rejoiced at this announcement. To have had to drive home with Carl after what she had overheard would have been too much to endure. Ed was not her chosen companion as a rule, but now she was

glad to be with him. When they were driving off in the shay behind the carriage it occurred to her that this harum-scarum youngest brother of hers might be some one in whom she could safely confide part of her secret without having all of it drawn from her. Quentin or her father would, if approached with a half-confidence, see at once that she was hiding something and insist on a full confession and she was not yet ready to tell of Carl's proved treachery. She only wanted some one in the family to know there was to be a burglary so she would not have all the responsibility.

"Ed," she said hurriedly, holding tight to her seat to keep from being thrown out by her brother's eccentric driving and rather hoping her information would sober him a little and make the homeward trip safer, "Ed, I've something strange to tell you. I heard two men this morning planning to break into and rob our house while we are all on the picnic to-morrow."

Ed changed his mind about driving the shay deep into a rut in the road to see whether or not it would turn over and gave his full attention to his sister's words.

"Are you serious, Sara? Did you get a good look at the men?"

"I didn't see them at all. I heard them by a trick of acoustics in the hall of the House of Representatives. They may have been on the opposite side of the room from me, but their voices came in a clear whisper from behind a pillar along the wall. What

they want to get is a paper—a political paper of Father's, I suppose—and they know we are all going to be away to-morrow so they plan to break in then."

"You say they want a paper—a document, you mean? Then they must be political enemies of Father's. Perhaps they are members of Congress. Wow, Sara! This is funny!"

Sara said nothing. She let Ed believe that the men she had heard plotting might be colleagues of her father's in the Senate, who were after the copy of a bill he was going to introduce when Congress convened or interested in some similar matter which might lead them to get information they needed in an underhanded way. She did not tell her brother that she knew the matter was much more serious than that because the actors in the drama were foreigners and therefore their scheming was directed against the United States and not against just their father or his political party. Sara could not explain to herself why she wanted to shield Carl Rechberg but, for the present at least, she did. And this desire had been born only that morning.

"I'll tell you what let's do, Sara," Ed went on after a moment devoted to some vague mental activity which passed with him for thinking. "Let's you and me catch the burglar ourselves without telling anybody else about it until afterwards. You know the family isn't going very far from the house for the picnic, just to that hill half a mile away where the walnut trees are, and so we can slip away on the pretext of looking elsewhere for nuts and

come home and lie in wait for the housebreaker. I'll load Father's gun and it will be fun to step out of hiding and confront the men in the very act of rifling Father's desk. Maybe we'll recognize them and then what a hold we'll have over them! We'll make them squirm!"

The plan rather appealed to Sara. She didn't expect what Ed expected, but it solved her difficulty about what to do in the matter. She and Ed and Marybelle, whom she was going to tell all about it, would catch the burglar themselves and find out what paper he was after and then she would know more about everything.

It was past the middle of the afternoon when at last the Morelands were all at home again, and they had started off soon after the nine o'clock breakfast. The great distances and bad roads made a day-long affair of every call or church meeting or shopping trip in those days in Washington. But at least on returning one felt that one had done one's duty and could eat dinner in peace and afford to be lazy the rest of the evening, though, to be sure, guests were apt to drop in to eight o'clock tea and stay until eleven. Washington was a sociable city.

The guests who dropped in at the Moreland home that evening were Mr. and Mrs. Fulton and Marybelle, and Sara hurried her chum upstairs to her room as quickly as she could get her away from the others.

"Marybelle, I've discovered something overwhelming," she announced breathlessly.

"Better let me sit down before you tell it," said Marybelle. "If it overwhelms such a naturally calm person as you are, it will throw an excitable person like me off her feet. Now, then! What is it?"

Marybelle had sat down in Sara's high-back chair and gripped the arms tight and looked like somebody about to receive a terrible shock. But as Sara told her everything—about the drive and talk with Carl and then about what she had overheard at the Capitol—her interest became too great for joking. She jumped to her feet and whirled around and around.

"Oh Sara, this is thrilling! Have you told anybody but me? Some member of your family really ought to know."

"I've told Ed," said Sara. "At least I've told him part of it."

"Ed?" Marybelle repeated, very, very doubtfully. "How did you happen to choose him to confide in?"

"Because I knew he wouldn't ask questions like Quentin. I didn't have to tell him that one of those I heard plotting was Carl. He only knows that burglars are going to break in, and he suggests that we catch them ourselves."

Marybelle liked that idea, too. The girls had to go downstairs again to tea, but they talked about their plans at odd moments all evening and Marybelle persuaded her mother to let her stay all night again as otherwise she might be too late for the outing next day.

CHAPTER XI

THE BURGLARY

"OH, do let's be starting!" cried Louise next morning when the clock had struck nine and the sun had pierced the mists and promised a radiant autumn day.

"Very well, you young people go on," her mother agreed. "Your father and aunt and I will come a little later, and at noon Joe and Hattie will follow us with the lunch."

Ed joined Sara and Marybelle, who were standing apart from the others in front of the house.

"We needn't bother about the burglar until noon," he whispered to them. "Nobody will try to get in the house until the servants leave. When we see Joe and Hattie starting up the hill, we'll come back. That's the advantage of picnicking so near home."

Then Ed took off ahead of everybody, striking the trees he passed with a heavy stick, jeering at the squirrels who chattered their indignation at his behavior, kicking up piles of leaves, and conducting himself more like a ten-year-old than a young gentleman of seventeen. Quentin and Carl and the older girls followed behind at a sedate walk while Marybelle and Sara brought up the rear.

"Do you notice how often Carl looks back over his shoulder at us?" Marybelle whispered to her chum. "You've made an impression on him, Sara. You've piqued his interest by suspecting him of being a spy and telling him so."

It did seem as if Marybelle was right. Though Carl was assisting Grace up the hillside he twice let her stumble while he tried to look back at and perhaps listen to the younger girls behind him. And when the leaders had reached the top of the hill he moved aside from Grace and held out his hand to Sara to help her up on the ledge of rock where the others stood. Not to be outdone in gallantry by the young Austrian, Quentin hastened to give his hand to Marybelle. Then the three boys and four girls stood there on the hilltop and surveyed the scene.

"I love October," said Marybelle. "I'm glad I was born in it."

"On what day in October were you born, Marybelle?" Grace asked her. Since Carl seemed so interested in "the children" (as Grace always thought of Sara and her friends) she was willing to show them a little attention also.

"The very last," Marybelle admitted.

"What! Hallowe'en?" Carl laughed.

She nodded cheerfully. "Yes, the night that witches fly through the air on broomsticks and goblins and ghosts are abroad. My parents think that their real child was spirited away by some mischievous sprite in the very hour of her birth and a baby imp substituted in her stead."

"Do you think they would exchange the imp for the real child if they could get her back?" Quentin put in, amused by Marybelle as most people were.

"No, I don't believe they would. They are used to me now."

When the spreading view could no longer hold attention the young people jumped down from the rocky ledge and began the business of the day, which was partly to look for nuts but mostly to enjoy themselves in any way they chose.

That sober Quentin should attach himself to lively little Marybelle that morning in the woods was not very surprising perhaps. All the other girls were his sisters, and Marybelle, as the daughter of a politician, had entertained older and soberer men in her time than Sara's nineteen-year-old brother. But that Carl should show the interest he did in Sara would have astonished Grace and Louise very much if they had noticed it. She was glad that her sisters were never quite aware of the number of times he addressed her nor his efforts to make her talk.

"Do you still think badly of me because I wear an unusual watch-charm?" he asked her one time, pausing by her side to put some nuts in the basket she was filling.

"I don't know what to think of you," Sara answered, quite truthfully.

"Have you found anything else in the least suspicious about me?" he persisted in a teasing tone.

"Hadn't you better be helping Grace and Louise fill their baskets?" Sara suggested, not very politely

perhaps. "They are more afraid of staining their hands than I am and really need help."

Carl bit his lip, looked at her through narrowed eyes, and turned his attention to her sisters. He determined he would not think of that strange little girl again but could think of nobody else all morning.

The older people joined the younger element an hour later. Senator Moreland had a friend with him who had ridden out to see him that morning, and he had brought him along to the picnic. The two men walked off into the woods together and sat down on a log to talk; Miss Julia took out a sketch-book and tried to make a drawing of the scattered buildings of Washington as seen from the top of this hill; Mrs. Moreland decided where the lunch should be spread and the fire built; and the boys and girls kept on roaming and talking and sometimes picking up nuts.

"Oh, look, how funny!" cried Louise suddenly. "Here comes the cook driving in the shay. The rest of us all walked."

"Hattie is too fat to walk," Grace explained, "and somebody had to drive with the lunch hamper anyhow. Joe is bringing mats and chairs."

"Now is the time for us to slide back home," Ed whispered to Sara and Marybelle, drawing them aside. "I've got a key to the back door in case the house is locked up as I suppose it is. Come on! Nobody will miss us."

It was true that by this time Sara and Marybelle were able to get away unnoticed. By keeping out

of sight of the others for a while they had quietly detached themselves from the gathering, and unless they were gone so long that Hattie would have time to set out her lunch and cook some of it over the outdoor fire it was not probable that anybody would look for the three youngest members of the party.

They stole through the woods to a path less well defined and more secluded than the one by which they had come up and so went down without being seen. At the foot of the hill they started running but still tried to keep hidden from those above on the hilltop and from the man or men who might be watching the house.

"Joe certainly closed everything tight," Ed observed when the three had come in near view of the shuttered house. "I don't see how any burglar is going to break in."

Sara looked warningly at Marybelle. The look said that she was not to let Ed guess that somebody on the inside was to have arranged for the thief or thieves to get in easily. Besides, that had to be verified.

"What was the use of locking up like this when your family was only going to the hilltop?" Marybelle wondered.

"There have been some stray Indians around recently and then the house is so isolated," Sara explained. "Mother told Joe not to leave anything open. I heard her tell him that before we left."

When they were in the house Sara ran to examine the side door which she had heard Carl mention as

the door he would try to leave unlocked for the trespasser. Marybelle followed her. This door had a bolt instead of a key and when the girls first looked at it they were a little disconcerted to see that it appeared to be securely fastened.

"Sara," Marybelle giggled, "I believe you went to sleep in church yesterday and dreamed all that about burglars plotting to break in here. You'd been talking with Carl on the drive and your mind was full of suspicions of him, and it's perfectly natural that you should dream that sort of thing. Also it's perfectly natural, too, that you should fall asleep in that hot room after the cool drive. Older people than you have been lulled to sleep by sermons."

"You make me feel like an awful gump, Marybelle," Sara answered soberly. "If I dreamed all that I—"

She gave the door-knob a tug as she spoke and the door opened so suddenly that she fell backwards against her chum. Part of the bolt had come off.

"Hum!" said Marybelle. "I beg your pardon, Sara. You weren't dreaming after all, for that bolt has been tampered with."

Examining it closely the girls found out what had been done to it to permit the door to open like that after the bolt was shot. Carl, or somebody, had unscrewed the socket into which the iron fitted and screwed it back with smaller screws, which were accordingly loose in the holes which the big screws had made. The bolt looked firm enough, as the servants no doubt imagined when they fastened it, but a hard

push or pull on the door would cause it to force its socket and the door would open. That was what Sara's tug on the knob had done and what a hard push from the outside would also accomplish.

Sara gathered up the screws and put them back with her fingers. She intended to leave everything just as she had found it in order to watch and see what happened. But neither she nor Marybelle breathed a word of their discovery to Ed. They could not do so without betraying Carl's part in the plot. And the girls had agreed now that they would keep their own counsel about Carl. Senator Moreland had been warned once.

"I'll get the gun," Ed said, groping his way toward the girls in the side hall. "Gosh! How dark it is with all the shutters closed. I think I'll open some of the windows."

"No, don't," Sara protested. "The house must look as if no one is in it. But find the gun as quick as you can. We won't be safe without it."

"I wish I could find Father's dueling pistols, but he keeps them locked up," Ed lamented. "I know where the gun is, though. You wait right here."

But the girls didn't wait; they followed him upstairs. They didn't want to be alone if the expected intruder arrived, and besides Sara thought Ed would need her to help him find the bullet pouch or something. They went to the place where the Senator usually put his gun when he came back from a hunting trip, but to their dismay it wasn't there. Then

they looked everywhere else they could imagine a gun being, and still they could not find it.

"Father must have loaned it to somebody," Ed surmised. "This looks bad, girls. There isn't another weapon in the house except the pistols, and as I told you they are locked up. If a burglar breaks in, we can't do a thing."

"Shh!" cautioned Sara, holding up a warning hand. "There somebody comes now!"

Downstairs a footfall sounded in the uncarpeted side hall and a door closed audibly. After that there came voices in low guttural tones. There seemed to be at least two men in the house, and they were not speaking English. Ed took off his boots and moved softly toward the stairs and the girls slipped off their slippers and followed him. It was too dark to see anything below, but the voices were more than a whisper and somebody was trying to make a light with a tinder box.

"I believe they are foreigners, Sara," Ed whispered with his lips close to her ear. "I'm certain they are speaking German."

Ed was not a linguist, but he had studied German and he knew enough to recognize it on the lips of others. Sara felt that the information was significant and glanced at Marybelle. If the housebreakers were speaking German, they were either Austrians like Carl or perhaps Prussians. If they were Prussians, that would add another nationality to the group of men she suspected of being foreign spies. She decided she must ask her Aunt Julia to

tell her more about that league of nations in Europe which was working in the interests of kings.

Ed was straining his ears to hear all that was being said by the two men, whose dark figures were now clearly discernible below as his eyes grew more accustomed to the very faint light that filtered through the shuttered windows. For the first time since he took up the study of German Ed realized that the language might be useful to know, and he tried very hard to make sense of the words which reached him up the stair well. For a few moments the men stood just where he could hear them and then moved away toward the back of the house.

"Did you understand anything, Ed?" Marybelle asked in extreme curiosity, wishing that she, too, had studied German.

"I think they are looking for some means to make a light," Ed replied vaguely. "They said it was safer not to open the shutters."

"But there are candles in all the candlesticks," Sara pointed out. "New ones were placed all over the house this morning."

"Yes, but if I understood one of them right he said he didn't want to light a fresh candle and blacken the wick. I suppose they don't want to leave any trace of their presence if they can help it."

A silence followed and then the sound of a heavy body falling over something in the gloom and a vehement exclamation.

"What did he say?" Marybelle whispered to Ed, every sense alert.

"I'd better not tell you," Ed chuckled.

The men thought there was no one in the house but themselves, and so they walked naturally. It was possible to follow the sound of their footsteps into the rear hall and even beyond. Keeping their post by the stair the boy and girls leaned as far over as they dared and looked and listened intently.

"They are now out on the porch that leads to the kitchen," Sara whispered. "They surely can't be going to the kitchen. There are no papers back there but cookery recipes."

"Gosh! I hope they won't steal the recipe for that caramel cake Hattie makes every Sunday," Ed prayed.

Fortunately for Ed's peace of mind the kitchen was not invaded and the cook book was safe. The men found what they sought on a shelf on the back porch and came again into the front of the house with a lighted lantern in hand. Now it seemed they were ready to search for whatever had brought them to the house, and Ed thought he understood them to congratulate each other on having found a lantern that would cast a strong light where it was needed and at the same time shield the beams from being thrown against the shutters and perhaps attract attention from without.

Suddenly Ed jumped. "They are coming upstairs," he whispered.

Sara had half expected this. Softly, in their stocking feet, the three of them stole away from the vicinity of the steps and Sara suggested hiding in her

Aunt Julia's room as it was just across the hall from her father's study where, she was assured, the men were going. From behind the door they could watch what happened. Ed nodded his agreement and they slipped inside.

"I'll wager that some person who has often been in this house to call on father gave these men their instructions," the boy breathed in his sister's ear. "They couldn't find their way around so well otherwise."

Sara, thinking of Carl, assented. But she let her brother remain in ignorance of who the traitor was. There had been many callers at the house since they had moved in and Ed was at leave to think that one of these visitors had sent these men here for a political purpose.

But had they been so carefully instructed after all? Instead of coming straight toward the Senator's study they were going into another room at the rear—into Sara's own! When Sara peeped from behind her aunt's door and saw this she was sorely puzzled. But she thought it was just a mistake.

"They'll come this way in a moment," she whispered to Ed. "When they find a bed and bureau and all my dresses and school books, they'll know they are in the wrong room."

Then something very peculiar indeed happened. Loud, terrified exclamations from two voices came from Sara's room, something clattered on the floor, and both men dashed out of the door and down the stairs with the noise of a small army. A slamming

door told that their progress did not end until they were out of the house—no, nor even then, for they ran away from the vicinity of the dwelling almost as fast as they had run out of it. Ed and Sara, who rushed to a window and opened the shutters, saw them in full flight. Marybelle hung over the banisters.

"How very odd!" Sara exclaimed. "What could have frightened them so?"

"Can't you guess?" Ed asked. "I've no doubt it was the ghost."

Sara felt a cold chill run down her spine. "The—the ghost?" she stammered. "And in *my* room? Oh, Ed, let's get out of this house quick. I'd rather meet a dozen burglars than one ghost."

Ed had often expressed a wish to meet the ghost of Major Burton, which the whole town believed to haunt this house, but now he was very willing to escort the girls outside. He did, however, glance into Sara's room as they passed the door. He caught up and extinguished the lantern which the Germans had dropped and which might easily have set the house on fire, but he lingered no longer than that and in another moment he and Sara and Marybelle were out in the sunshine again.

"We didn't need the gun after all," the boy commented with a grin. "Our ghost was weapon enough. Only, of course, if we'd had the gun we might have caught those men and made them tell us what they were after. How much of all this shall we tell the family, Sara?" he asked after a moment's

thought. "If we tell Father that you overheard a plot to break in here as long ago as yesterday, he'll be awfully mad at us for not letting him know before. He won't understand about our wanting to catch the men ourselves. So suppose we say we came back to the house for something and let him think we just happened to be here when the burglars broke in?"

"Yes, that's all we need to tell," Sara agreed eagerly, for she did not want Carl to know that his talk with Godoy had been overheard. "Our coming back to the house for something will seem perfectly natural."

They went up the hill to rejoin their party, and the tale they told created so much interest that they felt very important. The Senator thought the men must be ordinary burglars after silver and money though Ed hinted that they were after a paper of his. As he had no important document in the house and knew of no political enemies whatever, he could not believe that possible. Ed had simply misunderstood the conversation in German. But the information that the "ghost" had frightened the intruders away was a matter of uneasiness to everybody. Mrs. Moreland, who had herself seen the apparition once, was strongly inclined to believe that the men had really seen something strange and had not been deluded by overstrained imaginations.

"But there is some explanation, of course," she said to her daughters, who were all frightened. "There is no such thing as a disembodied spirit. Joe

will go back to the house and guard it from burglars the rest of the day, and there is no reason why this strange occurrence need spoil our nutting party. Carl," she directed the guest of honor, "you are not to think of this any more because we want you to enjoy our picnic."

Carl smilingly promised not to think of it for another moment, but from his expression the promise was not well kept. Sara and Marybelle, who watched him, could see that he was seriously disturbed. His plans had failed because his agents had been frightened by—of all things!—a ghost. He could not ask for any information about the apparition at the moment without violating Mrs. Moreland's prohibition, but Sara was sure he would be asking a great deal about it before long.

"Sara, why do you and Marybelle look at me so queerly?" he questioned suddenly as they were all gathered around the camp fire helping to cook their own lunch by holding meat toward the flames on long switches. He was uncomfortably aware that both the girls had been regarding him intently for sometime.

"I beg your pardon," said Sara promptly and turned her eyes away from him. Marybelle did the same. But he was still uncomfortable. An apology answered nothing.

CHAPTER XII

A PANTHER AND A PESSIMIST

THE Morelands had come home from their nutting party before sunset and now dusk was falling. When the big red sun had dropped behind the wooded hills, the air had immediately grown edgy and the fires which burned brightly on three hearths downstairs drew the household around them. Dinner promised to be late because of Hattie's extra exertions at the picnic.

"Oh, how careless I am!" Miss Julia exclaimed suddenly, sitting up very straight in the big chair in the chimney corner where she had been dozing comfortably. "How absent-minded I am becoming! Dear me, this is distressing."

"Have you had a bad dream, sister?" the Senator questioned in amusement.

"No, no. I have just remembered that I left a valuable bracelet hanging on a tree in the woods this afternoon. It was so heavy I took it off my arm while we were cooking the lunch and hung it on a knot on a tree trunk, and I've left it there. Now which one of you boys will go back after it for me this minute? I can't leave it in the woods all night, for I shouldn't sleep a wink for worrying about it."

"Ed will go, I'm sure, Aunt Julia," Quentin said hurriedly. "I'm a bit too tired myself."

"Huh!" Ed grunted. "I'd like to know what you've done to tire you that I haven't done, too? In fact I've done about twice as much as you have. Quentin will go after your bracelet, Aunt Julia."

"It's not quite dark yet," Miss Julia said, looking from a window. "Please, one of you hurry back up the hill and look for the bracelet while there is a little light left. It would break my heart to lose it."

"Ed will go," said Quentin firmly.

"Quen will go," Ed retorted.

"Let me be the compromise candidate, Miss Julia," Carl suggested with a laugh, rising to his feet. "I was not allowed to help with gathering the firewood or any other work this afternoon, and I suspect I am less tired than anybody."

"To shame my nephews, Carl, I will accept your offer," Miss Julia assented, shooting a sharp glance at Quentin and Ed, who only chuckled and settled deeper into their chairs. They made not the slightest objection to Carl's doing the errand for them.

"Now, let me see," went on Miss Julia thoughtfully. "I wonder if I can tell you how to find the tree on which I hung the bracelet. It was not directly over the camp fire because I was afraid it would fall in, or fall down and roll in, but it was not far away from where we were all sitting. Unfortunately, I didn't notice what kind of a tree it was. I can see it plainly, myself, but—wait! Sara saw me hang it there. Sara, O Sara!"

Sara and Marybelle were in the next room, and both the girls answered the summons.

"Sara, do you think you could find the tree on which I hung my bracelet at the picnic this afternoon?" her aunt asked. "Yes, my dear, I left it there like a gump."

"I know exactly where it is, Aunt Julia," Sara assured her. "I could go right to it."

"So could I, Miss Julia," said Marybelle.

"Then you girls can save me a long walk by going with Carl to show him where it is. He has offered to go for it but I'm sure he couldn't find it alone, and of course you little girls couldn't go without an escort. So you must make a party of it."

"I'll run upstairs and put on my cloak," Sara agreed. "Marybelle, I'll bring yours too."

"No, I'll come with you and get it myself," said her chum.

Upstairs in Sara's room Marybelle closed the door and asked breathlessly how they were to treat Carl.

"I've been thinking about that," Sara admitted. "You and I have been bad detectives, Marybelle, especially me. If we are ever to find out what he is after in this house we must treat him naturally. I'm sorry I put him on his guard by telling him so much yesterday. And to-day I've done it again—I mean, I've shown him that I distrust him. I was quite rude to him when he was helping me pick up nuts, and after we had been back to the house, and found the bolt of the door unscrewed and the bur-

glars had arrived to prove that what I overheard yesterday wasn't a dream, you and I both looked at him so suspiciously that he felt it and asked why we were doing it. Don't you remember? So now we simply must stop acting like that. We must pretend to be on easy terms with him and lull his fears. If we don't we will *never* find out what brought him here."

Marybelle thought it over and agreed with her. Then they hurried downstairs again and a few moments later were out in the chill dusk with a crescent moon floating over their heads. Carl was relieved when he discovered that both of them were going to be friendly. He decided he had been mistaken in thinking that Sara had found out anything more about him than she had told him on the drive the previous day. He could laugh at her for being suspicious of the emblem on his watch-fob, but suppose she had discovered his part in the attempted robbery of her home, which, by some queer freak of luck, she had been in the house to witness? Then she would have had something against him too serious to explain away. That thought had made him very uneasy.

"What is this odd tale of a ghost in your house?" the boy asked Sara as he walked between the two girls along the grassy path that cut across a meadow toward the hillside. "It seems impossible that burglars could have been frightened away by anything imaginary but even more impossible to believe in a ghost."

"Did you know the house was haunted when you came here to board?" Marybelle put in.

"Yes, I was told that this was the old Burton home and that it was reported to be haunted," the boy admitted. "But not believing in spirits that didn't bother me."

"Do you believe in them now?" Marybelle persisted.

"No, but I don't understand what it is that people see in the house. Mrs. Moreland says she saw something strange one night herself."

"Nobody believes in the ghost but nobody understands," said Sara. "So you are just like all the rest of us."

"Is it Major Burton who is supposed to appear?" he asked.

"Yes, the former owner of the house. The ghost is always reported to wear a Continental uniform, and Major Burton was buried in his regimentals. He was a very ardent patriot during the Revolutionary War and afterwards he helped to form the new government. My father knew him and says he was one of the finest men in the world."

"Then what prevents him from resting peacefully in his grave?" Carl persisted. "Why does he haunt the house in which he lived?"

"Get my father to tell you about it," Sara suggested. "He knows the story better than I do. All I know is that the ghost is supposed to be too unhappy about something to rest in peace. It isn't

anything he did himself that worries him but something about his family."

Carl walked in silence for a while and then abruptly changed the subject.

"Well, I hope we find that bracelet for Miss Julia," he said in a lighter tone. "She must be a very wealthy woman to be so careless with her jewels."

The girls admitted that it was unusual to hang a bracelet on a tree in the woods and leave it there but it was the sort of thing people do in absent-minded moments. The girls liked to talk and Carl found himself amused by them both. Sara was a droll little thing and he found her more interesting than either of her pretty sisters. She had that sort of attractiveness which is hard to define.

By the time the three of them had reached the top of the hill Carl was entirely convinced that neither girl now regarded him with suspicion. They had talked with him as easily as if he were Ed. And both the girls had found him such pleasant company that they were wishing thev were mistaken about his being a spy.

The camp fire which the picnic party had made that day had been covered over, but there was still a red glow discernible under the ashes. Thrusting a heavy dry stick into these red brands, Carl made a torch and held it up to light the glade which was now almost entirely dark in spite of the lingering twilight in the meadows. Marybelle pounced on a big apple which had rolled away from her that after-

noon when the party was roasting some after lunch, and now that she had the truant she began at once to eat it to make sure it didn't get away again. For Marybelle enjoyed being out in the woods in the dark and was willing to prolong the experience.

Sara, less happy-go-lucky than her chum, set about looking for the bracelet at once and left Marybelle laughing with Carl over her limitless appetite, for she had solemnly assured him that a mere apple, even a big one, wouldn't spoil her dinner a bit. She would show him when they got back to the house that she could eat right through three courses just the same.

Sara knew where the tree was that she was looking for. It was just a little distance from where Carl and Marybelle were talking. She could even see two jewels on her aunt's bracelet gleaming in the light of the red, smoking torch Carl was holding up. But the gleam was lower down than she had expected to find the bracelet and she thought it must have fallen off that high knot and caught on the underbrush about a foot from the ground. Yet the jewels that gleamed were so far apart that they suggested a tiara rather than a bracelet. Then Sara stood rigid and stared at those two fiery points in the dark underbrush. She was looking into the eyes of a crouching panther.

The great beast slowly crept closer, and Sara just stood there and watched it. It made no sound at all; it didn't crack a twig as its big velvet paws moved through the grass, and it was crouching so low that it made Sara think of a giant yellow serpent, with a

cat's face, gliding over the ground. Then, in that same uncanny silence, it sprang and if something in Sara's brain had not finally waked up and advised her to jump at the same time, the heavy animal would have borne her to the earth. But she did spring aside and found her voice and screamed. Carl and Marybelle looked toward her and saw her danger, and Marybelle screamed too. Knowing something of the cowardice of panthers, Marybelle thought their voices might frighten it away, but evidently here was a puma too hungry to forego its prey. With a snarl of rage the beast turned around and started to leap again, but now Sara had fled to Marybelle's side and Carl put himself in the path with his torch for a weapon. He thrust it into the panther's eyes and jumped aside to avoid the frenzied leap, then swept the flame across its muzzle again and again as adroitly as a skilled swordsman applies his blade. It was a short battle, for the scared beast soon ran away with a burnt nose, howling with pain, but to Sara and Marybelle the brief moments had seemed endless.

"That was an adventure," Carl said, rejoining them. "Something to write about in your diaries."

"I don't keep a diary," said Sara, "but I may begin one now to tell how brave you were to attack that hungry panther with nothing but a torch. You saved my life."

"Panthers are great cowards," said Marybelle. "A little dog of mine chased one through the woods one time. Just the same, they are awfully dangerous

when hungry and desperate enough to attack people this way," she conceded. "You really were quite brave, Carl."

Carl bowed low.

"Did you find your aunt's bracelet, Sara?" he asked.

"No, I thought I saw it gleaming in the dark and I went to pick it up and it was the panther's eyes," Sara explained. She giggled hysterically and so did Marybelle. The yells of the beast could still be heard in the distance, and they thought it would probably yowl all night in its pain.

Carl held up what was left of the rapidly diminishing torch and in the last gleam of its light they saw the bracelet and recovered it. Then they turned to hurry home.

"I'm shaking like a leaf," Sara whispered to her chum. "It's the reaction. I wasn't scared a bit when I saw the thing creeping on me."

"Yes, you were, too," Marybelle protested. "If you hadn't been half paralyzed with terror you would have jumped quicker. And I was so scared I couldn't have run a step. But I don't believe Carl was afraid."

As they went down the hill Sara reflected that perhaps a beaver hat could cover as cool a head as a coonskin cap and a satin waistcoat as stout a heart as a leather hunting-shirt. She felt that her former ideals of manliness and courage had shifted a little that night. It was exciting to have been rescued from a wild animal by a young aristocrat from over

the seas. She was sure that many a young lady in Washington would envy her the adventure. And yet she was forced to distrust her rescuer as an enemy of her country. He had left a door open so that burglars could break into her house that day, and he received messages in code from two men who had played highwaymen in order to read her father's papers. It was all very confusing.

"Well, Sara, you have had a deal of excitement to-day," Mrs. Moreland said when she had heard what had occurred on the hilltops. "Burglars, a ghost, and a panther have all played a part in it. You had better be very quiet the rest of the evening or you will sleep poorly to-night."

Mrs. Moreland could be as solicitous as any mother when her children were injured or ill but when they missed being harmed, even by a slight margin, she did not let her imagination plague her by picturing what might have happened. Since Sara was safe it was no use worrying about the panther, she reasoned.

After dinner Senator Moreland and Quentin rode away on their horses to report to the legal authorities that burglars had entered their house that day. It was such a queer occurrence, as described by Ed and Sara, that the Senator wanted to catch the German-speaking housebreakers if possible and find out the meaning of their intrusion, supposing there was any meaning beyond the hope of material gain.

Soon after the Senator and his eldest son departed a guest dropped in for tea. Sara opened the front

door when the knocker sounded and brought an odd-looking man back into the sitting room with her. He was very tall and emaciated, with sharp black eyes and the hawk features of one who boasts Indian ancestry. It was Mr. John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia, whom Sara had pointed out to Carl on the street the day before.

"You girls come with me," Miss Julia whispered to Sara and Marybelle. "We'll go back in the kitchen and fix the tea ourselves as Hattie is so tired she has gone to bed. Besides, I can never keep my temper when John Randolph is around."

"Aunt Julia," said Sara when they were in the far-away kitchen together, beyond the hearing of the family, "I want to ask you about something."

"Yes?" her aunt murmured, scurrying about the big room with the intention of preparing hot tea cakes for the company.

"I want you to tell Marybelle about that league of nations in Europe that was formed to keep kings on their thrones. I've forgotten what you called it."

"Why, I suppose you are talking about the Holy Alliance. No doubt Marybelle knows as much as I could tell her."

"No'm, I don't know much about it," said Marybelle, who had never heard of it but wasn't going to admit it.

"Well, it's a European confederation of nations, but it's a brotherhood of monarchs rather than a league of the people. The emperors and kings of Europe want to prevent the common people from

getting control of the governments, and so they have banded together to put down all republican tendencies. The Russian Emperor, the Austrian Emperor, the Prussian King, the French King, and the King of Spain, are all bound together in this alliance. And the famous prime minister of Austria—Prince Metternich—is the guiding spirit."

"How do they work? Do they send out spies to keep watch on the people?" Marybelle asked as she buttered slices of bread by the kitchen table.

"Europe is filled with the secret police of the Alliance," Miss Julia assured her. "They keep watch on everybody and report the trend of public opinion."

"Are there any in America?" Marybelle continued to question.

"Of course one doesn't know, but I shouldn't think so. Sara, go look in the sitting-room and try to catch your mother's eye. If she raises her brows, come and tell me. It will be a help signal."

Sara laughed and ran across the porch into the house. She stole into the room without attracting attention and beyond the candlelight there were shadows which concealed her so well that she lingered there, watching and listening with interest to Mr. Randolph, who was talking. She knew him well enough to know that he usually did the talking when he made a visit. And—also as usual—he seemed to be in a bad temper. He was criticizing everybody in the government and saying very, very bitter things about such men as Thomas Jefferson

and James Madison and John Adams and the President. He even criticized harshly the deceased Major Burton, in whose house he was sitting at the moment, and defied his ghost to appear to refute his words. And he seemed to think that the Constitution of the United States was not worthy of support. Sara listened with her mouth open.

"I'm glad to find some one to whom I can speak my mind freely, Mr. Rechberg," he said to Carl. "If Senator Moreland were here he would quarrel with me for saying these things. You, as a citizen of a country as different as possible from this one, will not feel called upon to answer me."

"I disagree with you about a great many things you have said," Carl told him, "and I have been tempted to answer you more than once. Indeed, I *shall* answer you!"

The boy's face was flushed, and he looked almost as angry as Randolph himself.

Then Sara caught her mother's eye and saw her brows go up again and again in quick succession. She knew that meant tea in a hurry and ran back to the kitchen to tell her aunt and Marybelle.

"Is Mr. Randolph in one of his unpleasant moods, Sara?" Miss Julia asked.

"Yes'm, he's saying all sorts of sarcastic things about the Federal government and the men who adopted our Constitution, and he's made Carl mad."

"Carl?" Marybelle repeated in astonishment. "Why should he care?"

Sara wondered herself. Why should Carl Rech-

berg of Vienna feel called upon to take issue with an American who attacked American statesmen? Was he trying to please Grace and Louise and Mrs. Moreland? Had he seen Sara herself in the shadows and was he trying to lull her suspicions of him as a foreign spy by professing admiration for her countrymen? Sara could not decide. But his anger had seemed genuine.

When the girls carried in tea a little later the argument had ceased, and though Mr. Randolph was still doing the talking he was now trying to please the ladies with his wit and charm of manner. Sara noticed that Carl sat looking into the fire in an absent-minded fashion and seemed engrossed with his thoughts. His anger had left him, but he looked troubled and perplexed. All evening she wondered what had made him flare up as he had.

When bedtime came and the guest was gone Sara and Marybelle were not eager to retire, though their eyelids were so heavy they could hardly hold them up. Mrs. Moreland understood the reason without being told.

"Sara, you and Marybelle are to change rooms with Ed to-night," she announced. "Since you both think a ghost appeared in your room to-day and frightened those burglars, I know you will be nervous if you try to sleep there. So Ed will stay there to-night, and if he sees nothing you will not be afraid to go back there to-morrow night."

This being arranged, the two sleepy girls were glad to go to bed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GHOST AGAIN

"LUXURY, luxury!" Ed commented as he stepped into the room he was to occupy for the night. "It almost makes one wish one were a girl."

"What makes you wish you were a girl, Ed?" Carl asked from the hall and came into the room behind him.

"I said *almost,*" Ed corrected him. "Nothing could make me actually wish it. But just look at that fire on the hearth and the pan of coals in the bed to warm the sheets. All arranged for the comfort of two little females. It's enough to make a man go back to using clubs and dragging women around by the hair."

"Well, you profit by it to-night," Carl reminded him. "The girls are sleeping in your cold room, and you've got the one that was prepared for them. You've no cause to complain."

Carl lingered by the fire and watched Ed as he roamed about his sister's room and presently opened the wardrobe.

"Want to see what I'd look like if I were a girl, Carl?" the incorrigible brother asked. "Then just wait until I get on a bonnet and a shawl and one of

these ruffled skirts. Now then! La, Mr. Rechberg, you mustn't flatter me like that!"

"I'll never flatter you while those big boots of yours protrude from under your ruffles," Carl assured him, obliged to laugh at this ridiculous caricature of a simpering maiden. "Can't you find some slippers in that wardrobe to finish off your costume?"

"I'll see," said Ed, nothing loath. "Oho! Here's a box on the top shelf with the most extraordinary silver slippers in it *and* a feather fan *and* a spangled scarf *and* a bracelet and earrings. Who would have thought a little mouse like Sara had all these fancy gewgaws!"

"May I look?" Carl asked, approaching the wardrobe where Ed stood holding Sara's open treasure box in his hands.

But just then Mrs. Moreland walked in.

"Of all things!" she exclaimed. "Ed Moreland, take off Sara's clothes this minute and put that box back on the shelf. I'm ashamed of you! And, Carl, you had no business egging him on and I tell you so frankly. If you boys were each five years younger, I'd take a hickory stick to you both."

She saw that everything was put back into Sara's wardrobe and locked the door and carried the key away with her. The boys looked at each other ruefully when she was gone. But in a moment Ed laughed hilariously. It was Carl who remained rueful and soon left the room for his own.

No ghost disturbed Ed's slumbers that night and next morning he gave the room a clean bill of health

and told Sara she could go back there without fear.

"But you'll have to ask Mother for the key to your wardrobe," he informed her. "She locked the thing last night and took possession of the key."

"I can guess why," said Sara. "And I'm much obliged to Mother."

School, after three holidays, was more tiring than usual that day and the noon recess was not the usual pleasure to Sara because Marybelle had to stay in the schoolroom and take out the stitches in the sampler she was working. Marybelle could handle an ax better than she could a needle, or rather, as her teacher informed her, she handled them both alike. So Sara ate her lunch with the dark-haired, liquid-eyed, little daughter of a South American diplomat—a new arrival in Washington—and listened to her tell about the revolution in her country which only a year or two before had freed it from Spain. This little girl, whose name was Dolores, made her story so dramatic that Sara thrilled as she listened.

"I'm so glad the revolutionists won," Sara said when she had finished.

"If we had not won," Dolores told her in slow, precise English, "my father would have been executed in some terrible way. Spain is very, very cruel and ruthless after a revolution of the people."

"Do you think there is any danger now?" Sara asked, so interested that she neglected to finish her jelly cake. "I mean, danger of Spain reconquering your country?"

"Not alone," the little South American assured her. "We are not afraid of Spain if *only* Spain assails us. But if other nations of Europe help her we will have no chance against their combined forces. That is what we fear."

"You mean the Holy Alliance?" Sara asked, to show her knowledge.

Dolores nodded. "We small nations are afraid of that," she admitted. "That great league could destroy us one by one. If the armies of the Alliance assist Spain in making colonies of us again we are lost."

"But the United States has recognized your independence," Sara reminded her. "That means something."

"But how much does it mean?" asked Dolores, who was old beyond her years. "Does it mean that all America will stand together against Europe? Would your big country help our smaller ones if the armies of the Holy Alliance invaded us? That is what none of us knows."

The bell sounded which brought the recess to an end, but Sara thought a good deal about her talk with Dolores during the afternoon classes. Having a South American schoolmate made that other continent seem much nearer.

When school was over there came the inevitable parting with Marybelle. For Marybelle's parents were naturally opposed to her spending every night with Sara, and it was necessary now for her to re-

turn to the boarding house on Capitol Hill where her mother was expecting her.

The two girls put their books in their black bags and made their curtsies to their teacher.

"Good afternoon, Miss Moreland and Miss Fulton," said prim Mistress Pickering, bending her stately gray head in a parting salutation. She never called any of her pupils by their first names, not even the little girls of eight or nine. And all of these small ladies were just as formal in addressing each other. On every side it was Miss This and Miss That as the children bade each other good-by. Only those very well acquainted used given names.

When all these adieux were properly made, the young maidens in their long-skirted, sprigged dresses and colored cloaks and muffs and velvet bonnets set off in various directions for their homes, but most of them turned toward the boarding houses on Capitol Hill where so many Congressional families had to reside. One or two fortunate pupils were met by carriages and driven away to Georgetown where there were fine, luxurious homes, but the distance was so great that Congress people preferred to stay nearer the Capitol. Sara, walking away toward the haunted house which her family had so boldly rented, knew that she was being watched with some awe by her schoolmates, who had heard rumors of another appearance of the ghost the day before. Washington society thought it amazing that the Morelands should continue to live in that strange

house from which all previous tenants had been frightened away. But it seemed they were not even thinking of moving.

Sara walked rapidly, for the afternoon light was waning and a cold wind was rising. All about her clouds of leaves eddied and whirled and under her feet they rustled loudly. The weather had turned colder but she was prepared for it. She had changed her footgear before leaving the school, putting her slippers away in her bag, and now was strongly shod for the long walk, while her tippet had been fastened close to her throat by Mistress Pickering's own maid, who saw to it that the young ladies were well wrapped up before they went out into the cold. Girls were considered delicate creatures in those days, especially about the throat. Throat troubles and lung troubles were such refined ailments that they were very popular.

Halfway home Sara began to look about for one of her brothers, but the figure she saw approaching her could not be either Quentin or Ed. Was it Carl? she asked herself, and frowned in great perplexity. Why did he persistently seek her company, she wondered. Had she really interested him so much by becoming suspicious of him? Was he afraid of her and trying to make friends with her for that reason? Whatever the cause she had determined to be equally friendly. It was the only way to find out anything. And to her own dismay she discovered that she liked this proved spy more and more every day.

So they met in the road and Carl laughed and took off his beaver and made her a deep bow.

"You are very kind to come to meet me," the girl said when he had fallen into step beside her. "But where are Quentin and Ed? They should not have let you come."

"Quentin was just starting here when I offered to take his place," Carl explained. "He and Ed both wanted to go elsewhere, and I was glad of the opportunity for a walk before dinner and to have the pleasure of meeting you. You must let me carry your school bag."

"It's not heavy, thank you," she protested.

"Not on my arm, perhaps, but it looks much too heavy for yours," he insisted.

So she let him have her bag of books and they walked along together through the growing dusk with the cold wind whirling the leaves around them. Sara had to purse her lips to keep from laughing.

"What books are in this bag I am carrying?" Carl asked presently. "Do you study—ah—do you study languages?"

"I study French," she told him. "I'm glad you put it that way. I don't pretend to read or speak it yet but I do study it."

"And how about Spanish? Do you not study that language, too?"

She shook her head.

"You could not read a word of it if a—document in that language fell into your hands?"

"Of course not."

"Do any of your family understand Spanish? Does your Aunt Julia?"

"None of us do. Aunt Julia can read and speak German and French a little but not a word of Spanish. However, we aren't so far behind the rest of Washington at that! Eight years ago, when James Madison was President, there couldn't anybody in the government understand Spanish and an official document that came to the President was sent to a young lady, the granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson, to be translated."

In telling about Miss Randolph's little triumph Sara failed to consider that Carl's questions were a little unusual or to note his satisfaction with her answers.

"Where are Grace and Louise?" Sara asked presently. She could not understand how Carl had gotten away from them for the strange purpose of coming to meet her.

Carl seemed quite willing to change the subject.

"Miss Grace went calling with your Aunt Julia about noon and had not returned when I left; Miss Louise was taking out some stitches in her embroidery and shedding a few tears over the necessity. I believe her mother had scolded her a bit for not doing it well."

"I know just what Mother said to her," Sara stated demurely. "She said, 'For shame, Louise! Even Sara could have done better than that!' "

Carl laughed. "Yes, she did! How did you guess it?"

"Because I honestly think that Even Sara is my full name. The family always calls me that. They say, 'How nice you all look, girls! Even Sara is quite pretty in that blue dress!' or 'We are all going to such and such a place to-morrow, Even Sara!' And when Mother rebukes Grace or Louise she seldom fails to say, 'Why, Even Sara could—or else wouldn't—do such a thing!' until I feel like the tail of an elephant, and I'm sure nobody could feel more insignificant than that."

"It certainly doesn't sound very complimentary the way you describe it," Carl admitted in amusement, "but it *could* be a compliment, you know. You might become such an expert seamstress or musician that every time a member of your family saw a beautiful piece of needlework or heard a sonata perfectly played she or he would say, 'Why, Even Sara could do no better than that!' "

Sara laughed and agreed that that way of putting it would be very nice. Only the family never did use it that way.

As they approached the Moreland home they were startled by a wild shriek which came ringing from the interior of the house, and then sounds of running feet and exclamations and questions could also be heard. In the front hall they found Senator and Mrs. Moreland, Miss Julia, and Grace gathered around Louise who lay back in a chair with a white face.

"Oh, I saw it as clearly as I see you!" the girl was telling her family through chattering teeth. "It

was a tall man in a blue and buff uniform and I saw straight through him. I could see a figure on the wall paper in the middle of his chest."

"An encounter with the ghost," Senator Moreland explained to Carl as he and Sara came in. "Louise thinks she saw something supernatural in a trunk room upstairs."

"What were you doing in the trunk room, Louise?" Grace asked, for she and Miss Julia had just come home in the carriage and still had on their bonnets and cloaks.

"I was looking for some embroidery floss in a chest," the nervous girl explained. "Mother thought there was some there that would match my work better than the floss I was using. So I borrowed a lantern from the cook and went up there without *dreaming* of seeing anything. I didn't have the ghost in my mind at all."

"I'm sure you must have been thinking of it, Louise," her father protested. "It was only yesterday that those housebreakers were frightened away by seeing what they thought was a ghost, if we are to believe Sara's and Ed's story, and I'm sure that recollection had made you nervous."

But Louise shook her head vigorously. "I wasn't thinking about anything but my aggravating embroidery," she insisted. "I was taken completely by surprise."

"I thought that ghost only appeared at night," said Grace, "but this is twice it's appeared in the daytime."

"But not in the daylight," Miss Julia reminded her. "The trunk room was so dark that Louise says she had to carry a lantern, and yesterday the house had been tightly shuttered before we went away. So though it was day outside it was night indoors."

"I can vouch that Louise saw something odd," Mrs. Moreland declared. "I saw the same strange figure in the attic the first week we lived here."

"Let me have a light and look around a bit in that trunk room," Carl begged. "I am deeply interested and would like to investigate to satisfy my own curiosity."

"If you look somewhere on the stairs you'll find the lantern I dropped," Louise told him. "I don't know whether it's still lighted or not."

Carl did find it, relighted it by a candle in the hall, and went up the steps two at a time. Senator Moreland meanwhile assured himself that Ed and Quentin were really away from home and had not been playing a joke on their sister. It was as well to be sure of this, but he had thought it unlikely since both the boys were trustworthy and they had promised him before the family moved into the haunted house that they would never play any pranks on the girls and frighten them.

In ten minutes Carl came downstairs again. He had blown out his light, and there was a queer look on his face. He said he had also seen the ghost.

"Do you think a tramp is hiding in the house?" the Senator asked with more interest in the matter than he had felt before. He had attributed his

wife's and Louise's tales to nervousness and was by no means convinced that the two men who had broken into the house the day before had been frightened away by an apparition. That was only a guess made by two children.

"I could have caught the creature, had it been of flesh and blood," Carl soberly insisted. "I clutched its arm once but I might as well have clutched smoke. It just solemnly stared at me until I moved, and then it vanished."

The excitement grew and it looked as if dinner would be delayed that night by the cook having hysterics. Hattie and Joe in the kitchen hadn't a doubt that there was a ghost around and their fright was as genuine as its expression was noisy. For an hour or more the whole household was upset. Quentin and Ed, returning from their outing, were as excited as anybody and each rushed up to the trunk room but came away disappointed of any glimpse of it. Louise was so proud of having been the one to see it, and of having Carl to back her word, that she recovered from her former abject state and rather enjoyed herself.

As for Sara, she said nothing but after Carl had been upstairs and come down again with that queer expression on his face she felt certain that he knew more about it than he told. She had seen his lips twitching and guessed that he was trying hard not to laugh. What did he know about the ghost? Had he discovered a reasonable explanation for it? She believed he had and wondered why he was keeping

it to himself. Always she distrusted Carl Rechberg and yet she could not help liking him. A foreign spy he might be, but her father had said there was nothing in the house of any importance or interest to a foreigner and so why need she betray him and make him to go away? She would just keep watching him and see what she could learn for herself.

"Shall the ghost force us out of this comfortable home?" Senator Moreland asked his children that night. "Shall we let it scare us off as it has every one else who rented the place?"

The answer he received pleased him very much. The two boys, Grace and Louise, even Sara, voted with one voice to stay. They said they were not going to be frightened away by a ghost who did nothing worse than just drift across the wall,

CHAPTER XIV

THE SENATOR TELLS A STORY

"WILL you tell me, Senator Moreland, why the ghost of Major Burton is supposed to leave his grave and haunt this house?" Carl requested. "I asked Sara yesterday, but she told me to ask you."

They were all gathered around the fire in the sitting room immediately after passing the vote that no ghost should frighten them out of their comfortable home. It was a big half circle they made around the hearth and the younger members of the party were roasting chestnuts in the hot ashes and passing them around for refreshments. These were so hot that Louise was constantly squealing, and Ed took pleasure in making her do it.

"Hush, children!" Mrs. Moreland cautioned them. "Louise, you ought to know your brother well enough by now to expect tricks from him. Anyhow, try to keep quiet for ten minutes so that the rest of us can hear ourselves talk."

"So you have never heard the legend of Major Burton?" the Senator said to Carl. "Of course I will tell you what I know. According to popular report he cannot rest in his grave for constantly worrying about his son. Isn't that it, Julia?"

"So I have heard," his sister nodded.

"And what has his son done to worry him?" Carl persisted.

"Well, you shall hear the whole story. Major Burton fought through the Revolution as a young man and was quite middle-aged when he married. His wife came of native American stock just as he did, but her people had been Tories in the Revolution and I think they were always sorry the Colonies won their independence though of course they had to conceal their feelings. Major Burton hadn't been married long before he began to realize that his wife was not in sympathy with the American principles he believed in so firmly, but as he supposed he would live a long time he made no arrangement for the education and guardianship of his son in case of his death. And when he died suddenly his wife took the child and went abroad and has reared him in Europe. We don't know certainly what became of her, but rumor says she married a title and is now moving happily in court circles somewhere. And the son of one of America's bravest officers is no doubt a gentleman-in-waiting to a king—the Grand Master of the Shoes, or something like that. So the Major's ghost cannot rest for worrying about it. People say he will continue to haunt Burton house until his son comes back to America and claims his rights as a native citizen. And meanwhile the place cannot be sold for no one will buy a haunted house. The best the agent can do with it is rent it occasionally."

"A very interesting story," said Carl. "Thank you for telling it to me. Did you know Major Burton personally, Senator?"

"Very well indeed—outside his home."

"Why not in his home as well?"

The Senator laughed. "I was a very young fellow and I was afraid of his wife. She was such a very haughty lady that I fought shy of her. All of Washington society found her difficult to understand. It was during Thomas Jefferson's administration as President and his democratic ways awoke her scorn. It didn't surprise any of us when she put off for Europe as soon as her husband died. But we wish she had left the boy behind her. He was a patriot's son."

"But has not a mother as much right to impress her ideas on her son as a father has?" Carl asked, a little coldly.

"I don't deny it. I'm not finding fault with Mrs. Burton. I hardly knew her myself but those few people who did know her well declared she was a fine woman and as her family were all royalists I suppose she came by her politics as honestly as I come by mine. But she has got what she wanted out of life. If she has married a title she must be happy. So the Major's friends cannot help regretting that the Major's son has been deprived of his birthright of freedom."

Carl was sufficiently interested in the subject to continue asking questions about Major Burton and as the Senator liked to talk of his friend almost

the entire evening was spent in relating anecdotes of the Major. And because her father praised him so highly Sara felt a little more comfortable when she went to bed alone that night than she might otherwise have done. The ghost of a man like that surely wouldn't hurt a little girl who was doing nobody any harm. And fortified by that thought she slept peacefully all night and never let any one know how scared she had been at the prospect of sleeping again in her own room and without Marybelle.

A few days later Marybelle's spooky birthday arrived and Sara was sent for to help celebrate it. She was glad to spend that night outside the haunted house. And then gray November came upon the city. The weather was often so bad that Sara had to be driven to school in the mornings and fetched back in the afternoon. Sometimes Marybelle came back with her but they had nothing new that was exciting to talk about after they went to bed and for lack of it often had to go to sleep. For Carl had almost ceased to be mysterious. He did nothing that even Sara could find suspicious except that once she saw him deliberately avoid a meeting with the Spaniard, Godoy, on the street when the other man was trying hard to attract his attention.

Carl went often to parties with Grace and Louise and was introduced to many notable people by the Senator. He seemed reluctant to meet the President and so was not taken to the White House but Grace told him that a big ball was to be given there

very soon, even before the opening of Congress, and that he would simply have to go. She extracted a promise from him to attend, though he did not want to give it.

Miss Julia was usually with the girls and the young man when they went about together but not so much as a chaperon as because she was eager to renew old acquaintances after her years abroad. She even rode horseback with the young people, sitting very straight in her sidesaddle with an umbrella held over her head. Grace and Louise often rode with an umbrella, too, to protect their complexions. An English visitor to the city a few years before this period had observed with some amusement that both sexes in Washington, whether on horseback or afoot, "wore" an umbrella in all seasons: in summer to keep off the sunbeams; in winter as a shelter from rain and snow; in spring and autumn to intercept the dews of evening. He observed, too, that persons of all rank cantered their horses and he thought this gait fatigued the animals and was ungraceful besides. But he thought the young ladies of Washington were very charming and admired the simplicity of their clothes and their manners as contrasted with those of the cities of Europe. The only complaint he had to make concerning these lovely belles of the early republic was that they were so soon married to members of Congress and carried far away, seldom to return.

On the morning of the day that was to see the season's first ball at the President's house, excitement

was permeating every cranny of the Moreland home and the girls and boys were alike distracted. Perhaps Quentin and Ed were, if anything, more nervous over the society function than Grace and Louise as they were less accustomed to social affairs. Quentin was too serious-minded to go often to purely frivolous gatherings and Ed was too young and awkward and happy-go-lucky to be often invited. But a White House function attracted the older boy because he had a high respect for the chief executive of his country, and the President was used to entertaining wilder and woollier characters than Ed at his worst.

"I particularly want to go to-night because I will meet men of prominence whom I might never have the opportunity to talk with elsewhere," Quentin explained in his serious way. "We have good society in Washington, Carl, but it is so scattered that there is seldom a chance for intellectual conversation."

"La! We are not going to the ball to converse, intellectually or otherwise," Louise put in with fine scorn, "we are going to dance!"

"And I'm going to eat," Ed stated. "Mrs. Monroe is sure to have a fine collation. Here's what we can expect, though I mustn't tell how I found out!" And pulling a scrap of paper from his pocket he read aloud: "First they will pass around coffee, tea, toast, and warm cakes; second, ice cream; third, lemonade; fourth, bonbons and iced cakes; fifth, apples and oranges; sixth, nuts, almonds, and raisins; seventh, a solid supper consisting of meats

and savory pasties; eighth, boiling chocolate. What do you think of that list?"

"It ought to satisfy even such an abnormal appetite as yours," Grace told him with the same scorn for his greediness that Louise had shown for Quentin's pedantry. "How do you stay so lanky when you eat so much?" she asked with real curiosity as she regarded this angular brother.

"Don't you wish you knew!" Ed chuckled. "Don't you wish you could eat cake and ice cream like I do and still stay thin? It's a gift!"

Grace thought it must be and sighed a little. She thought she might be a little greedy too if she had that gift.

Not for the first time Sara wished that she, too, was going to the ball. It was really too bad to have to stay at home with only the cook for company when all the others were leaving for what corresponded to a court entertainment here in America. Joe, the houseman, would drive the family coach with the two older ladies inside, and there would also be a hack, hired at tremendous expense, to carry the Senator and his daughters, while Quentin, Ed, and Carl were to ride horseback. But not so much as a pumpkin to carry Sara! Her turn, her mother told her cheerfully, would come in two or three years when Grace and Louise were married and out of the way. Then she would have all the attention.

"For two straws I'd stay home with you, Cinderella," Carl told her.

"I know somebody who would have a horrid evening if you did," she warned him.

"Am I to be complimented or offended by that remark? Do you mean that Miss Grace or Miss Louise would have a horrid evening without me or that you would be the one to suffer if I stayed?"

"I meant that *you* would have a horrid evening," she explained hastily.

"I'd rather stay than go to the ball. I'm not excited over it."

Sara thought he was just saying that to make her feel better, but as a matter of fact Carl was very uncomfortable over the prospect of being presented to President Monroe, to Thomas Jefferson, and others whose services to the United States reached back to the days of the Revolution. He would have preferred to postpone those introductions; even to have returned to Austria without meeting them at all. But there seemed no way to avoid this ball.

And then fate stepped in and settled the matter in an unexpected way.

Dusk was falling and upstairs the Morelands were already busily dressing for the festivity while Sara was running back and forth to carry things to her mother and sisters. As the halls were dark now she had lighted a lantern in the kitchen and was going up with it to look for something in the trunk room—a sash or a bunch of silver flowers or one of the many other things the older girls seemed to be call-

ing for every minute—when an incident which was to affect many things occurred.

She had started up the front stairs and Carl was right behind her for he had recollected that he, too, must adorn himself for the party. Sara was thinking of various things but not for a moment of the ghost supposed to haunt the house after nightfall when suddenly, on the stair landing, it stood before her. As she raised her eyes she saw it there beside the grandfather's clock—a tall, dim figure of a man in a Continental uniform through whose transparent body the figures in the wall paper were visible.

And Sara screamed as she had never screamed before and fell backwards down the stairs.

CHAPTER XV

EXPLANATIONS

NOW Sara knew what she would do if she ever saw a ghost; she would fall downstairs. Fortunately for her, if not for him, Carl was right behind her and broke the force of the accident. She found herself on top of him at the bottom of the steps.

"Are you hurt?" he asked her when they had caught their respective breaths.

"I ought to ask you that. Did I kill you, Carl?"

"Not quite, though my ankle feels as if it were sprained. What was the matter?"

"Didn't you see it there on the stair landing?" she gasped. "The—the ghost!"

To her surprise he began to laugh at this, and then, trying to rise, the pain in his ankle made him groan, so that he was laughing and groaning at the same time. It was several moments before he could get any sort of control of himself.

"What's the matter? Who fell? What was that noise?" were the questions which rained down upon them from above.

Sara explained rather shrilly and the others ran downstairs in various stages of dress. Carl was helped into the sitting room and when it developed

that he really had sprained his ankle and could not go to the President's ball Grace and Louise lamented more than he. To have him stay at home would simply spoil the occasion, they declared.

"Sara, why did you have to be so clumsy?" Louise demanded in the irritation of disappointment.

"I saw the ghost on the stair landing, and it scared me just as it scared you when you saw it," Sara defended herself.

"Don't blame Sara; I richly deserve this injury," Carl here put in, still weak with laughter. "I knew all the time what the ghost was and I wouldn't tell. Where is the lantern?" he asked, looking all around.

"The lantern?" Sara repeated stupidly.

"Yes, the lantern you were carrying up the stairs, the lantern that every one who has seen the ghost has carried. It's a *magic lantern!* Bring it to me and I'll show you."

The family sat around him in perplexity and unbelief until Sara ran and fetched the lantern. It looked to all of them just like a plain, ordinary lantern, rather clumsier than most, but Carl insisted that it had been changed at some time into a crude, homemade affair for casting pictures on a sheet. He showed them the little metal tube that held the condenser with a transparent slide fixed firmly in place, the projecting lens beyond, and the spherical reflector that looked like a wind shield, and then by relighting it and turning it in the proper way he made the vague figure of a Continental officer ap-

pear on the white wall of the room. They all realized that had the room been darkened the picture would have been much clearer.

"If I may hazard a guess," said Carl, "this crude little magic lantern was made by the late Major Burton to amuse some small child years ago. It was an ordinary lantern at first until he added the projection, that has probably been mistaken for a handle of some sort, to hold the lens and put a transparent glass picture inside. Outwardly it is not much changed, as you see, but if held in the right way when it is lighted it does really cast out a picture in a dark room. I suspect the officer in uniform is General George Washington."

Everybody exclaimed in admiration of Carl's cleverness in figuring this out and laughed delightedly at having the mystery cleared away in such a simple manner. They saw now how the rumor of the house being haunted by a Continental soldier had started. The first person to rent the furnished house after Major Burton's death had mistaken the awkward, homemade magic lantern for what it had been before it was transformed, lighted it up and carried it into a dark room, and by accidentally holding it the right way, saw a figure on the wall. Probably that person, like everybody else since, had dropped the lantern in terror and with the extinguishing of the light the ghost vanished. As no family had stayed long in the "haunted house" no one had traced the picture to its source.

"It's a wonder the glass slide hasn't been broken

by so many falls," Grace said, examining it. "I believe it is a little cracked but it ought to be shivered by having been dropped so often."

"Perhaps it's magic in more ways than one," Louise suggested. "Oh, what fun to tell about this at the ball to-night!"

Mention of the ball sent them all scurrying upstairs to continue dressing for it and only Carl and Sara were left in the sitting room.

"So now you aren't the only one who has to stay home from the ball, Cinderella!" Carl said ruefully, looking at his ankle stretched out before him. "You'll have to endure my company whether you want it or not."

"Since you have to stay I'll admit I'm glad to have somebody here besides Hattie," Sara replied. "We'll talk and talk and talk, won't we?"

The long talk which she predicted did not begin at once, however. Sara had to run upstairs to continue her rôle of ladies' maid, and it was fully two hours later before these duties were done. When they were completed Sara took as much pride in the looks of her family as if they were so many fine pictures she had painted. A short-waisted dress of yellow satin with low neck and little puff sleeves heightened Grace's dark beauty while blonde Louise wore white muslin trimmed with lace over blue satin with little blue forget-me-nots in her light hair. Miss Julia in buff with a long train and a bird of paradise plume in her headdress was very stately, and Mrs. Moreland looked her handsomest in black velvet with a

turban. When they were all ready Senator Moreland declared they were fit to grace a king's court or—which he considered a greater compliment—the drawing-room of the President of the United States.

The gentleman and his two sons were elegant figures, also, in knee trousers and buckled shoes, which was still the formal evening wear for men as late as 1823. President Monroe would not countenance pantaloons at his state functions but clung to the old-fashioned garb of his youth, and he was to be known in history as "the last of the cocked hats" because no President after him ever wore that sort of headgear again.

A fine-looking group was the Moreland family as they started off for the ball, and as Sara stood in the doorway, watching them depart, she felt very envious. To go to a ball, she thought, would be a glorious experience, particularly a ball at the President's house. Standing on the steps in the cold November night while her mother and aunt and sisters got into the carriages she thought it very sad that she must wait two years before she could enjoy the dazzling scenes, the gay music, the collation and the fun of a formal ball at the national palace. She said so to her father as he was about to enter the hack.

"Oh, your time will come before you know it!" was his cheerful rejoinder and spoken more truly than he knew.

When they were all gone Sara turned back into the house and went into the sitting room, where Carl

was half reclining in two chairs in the dim glow of a half dead fire with no candles to lighten the darkness. From the dining room Hattie could be heard waddling about and singing, but it was not likely she would come into the other room. Sara and Carl were quite alone.

"Why is it so dark in here?" Sara asked when she first came into the room. "Did you blow out the lights, Carl?"

"Yes, all but the one in the lantern. I wanted to throw the picture on the wall. I've been sitting here staring at General Washington since all of you first went upstairs and left me, and I was so deeply sunk in thought that I think your parents imagined I was asleep when they looked in to tell me good night."

"It must have disappointed the girls that you were not awake to see how they looked," Sara said. "And you really missed something for they were both very fine."

He watched her as she poked up the fire and touched the fluted end of a paper lighter to the flames and lit the candles. There was a speculative look in his eyes which she did not see.

"How does it happen," he asked in a light tone, "that your friend Marybelle is not spending the night with you as usual? Has *she* gone to the ball, too?"

"She's ill with a feverish cold," Sara explained. "I was awfully disappointed because she couldn't come to-night, but I've known since yesterday that there wasn't any hope of it."

"Well, I'll try to be as interesting as I can to make up for it though I am sure my slow wits will make me a poor substitute for that lively young lady. What shall we do to entertain each other? Suppose you show me your treasures. I hear that you are the keeper of the family heirlooms and have a box filled with treasures on the top shelf of your wardrobe."

"For goodness' sake, where did you hear that?" Sara asked, laughing. "Of course, I'm no such thing, I mean a keeper of heirlooms. And I haven't got any treasures but just a few souvenirs with stories about them. Nothing but an old feather fan that belonged to my grandmother and a pair of silver slippers in which Aunt Julia danced at a court ball in Vienna and—"

"Hold!" cried Carl with a smile. "Are those the slippers that Miss Julia was telling me about, I wonder? She said she got the soles damp on a wet terrace and calmly appropriated some papers from a wastebasket in the Hofburg Palace to put inside to prevent her from taking cold. I'd like to see, just for fun, what the papers are."

"Well, I'll go fetch them," Sara agreed. "But I can tell you what one of them is right now. Aunt Julia translated it for me. It's a note in German from some official in the palace to some other official, discussing a change in the color of the uniforms of the Palace Guards."

"Why, that's an amusing souvenir, isn't it? And what is the other paper?"

"We don't know. It's written in Spanish, and none of us can read that language."

"Perhaps I can," Carl suggested. "I don't speak Spanish, but I can read it a little."

"All right, I'll get the paper," said Sara.

But she did not move. She stood there by the hearth with the charred remains of the candle-lighter in her hands and in quick succession she remembered several things. She remembered Carl had come to that house to get a paper (had she not heard him say as much to the Spaniard Godoy at the Capitol that Sunday in October?) and not long ago he had asked her if she studied Spanish or if any of her family could read a Spanish document if it fell into their hands. Also, it was into *her* room that the burglars had gone the day Carl left the side door unlocked for them and they had been frightened out by the "ghost." And Carl had been persistently seeking her company for a long time as if he hoped to gain something by making friends with her. She saw it all now. It was quite clear at last.

"What are you thinking about?" Carl asked her curiously.

"A lot of things," said Sara grimly. "I'm not going to bring you that paper until I know first what it is. I think it's something important and that you came to this house for the sole purpose of getting possession of it."

"More than that," admitted Carl, laughing, "I

came all the way to America for the sole purpose of recovering that paper."

Sara wished for her father or Quentin or Marybelle. She felt that the moment was a serious one.

"W-why didn't you just ask for it?" she stammered.

"That's what I ought to have done," he admitted. "I should have gone straight to your Aunt Julia and told her frankly that one of the papers she had innocently taken from a wastebasket in the palace in Vienna had fallen there accidentally when other papers on the table were being locked up; that a lackey in the palace had seen a strange woman come out of the cabinet the night of the ball and that the officials had at last learned the name of this woman and had sent me after her to Washington to see if she had the paper; and I should have openly requested the return. I'm sure she would have given it to me without question."

"Of course she would," Sara agreed.

"Well, then, will you give me the paper?"

"No, I won't. You've acted too queerly. There must be some reason why that paper shouldn't be read by an American, or you wouldn't have been so afraid to mention it all this time. I'm going to take it to school to-morrow and show it to a classmate of mine who is the daughter of a South American diplomat and of course knows Spanish. She will read it to me."

Quite a long silence followed that announcement.

Then Carl laughed again, and there was a note of relief in his tone.

"You win!" he told her. "And to save time I'm going to tell you what you would probably find out for yourself to-morrow. Suppose you sit down."

Sara sat down and gripped her hands together. She felt they might begin to tremble from excitement.

"Did you ever hear of the Holy Alliance of Europe, Sara?" he asked her.

Her heart skipped a beat. So she had guessed right! Carl really was an agent of the Holy Alliance. That was the "secret society" to which he and the Spaniard and the Russian all belonged.

"I think I know," she said. "It's a league of emperors and kings who are trying to suppress governments like ours. Aunt Julia said its secret police are very busy in Europe, but she didn't think the Alliance is interested in America."

"Not interested in these two great continents of North and South America? But of course it is! Just now—listen to me closely, Sara, for I'm going to tell you something of vital importance!—the Alliance is planning to assist Spain in recovering her colonies in South America and to help Russia in establishing new colonies down there. As you may know, the United States government has recognized the new republics of South America, but the Holy Alliance is going to try to make royal colonies of them again. They want to crush all republics if they can and reëstablish the divine right of kings.

That paper you have in your possession is—if it is what I think it is—a letter from the Emperor of Austria to the King of Spain, outlining the future plans of the Alliance in America. But it was never sent because it disappeared. It is believed to have been taken by your aunt and with what object no one knew at first. That's why I was sent after her immediately. It was hoped she had only taken it as a souvenir and had no idea it was of any importance. But, as you have guessed, I have been afraid to ask for it outright lest it be read before it was given up to me."

"What about that Spaniard and Russian?" Sara asked. "What are they doing in America?"

"They are regular agents of the Alliance. They have been traveling through your country trying to learn whether the people of the United States would care one way or another what happened in South and Central America. For that reason they got possession of your father's portfolio to see what he, a Senator, might think on the subject. All this is in their regular line of work. Mine was a special mission to bring them word of the lost paper. That paper would be dangerous reading if it fell into the hands of the President of the United States. For the Alliance is afraid of what your country may do if the President learns of its plans in South America."

"I shall give it to Father to give to Colonel Monroe," said Sara.

Carl smiled. "I haven't a doubt you will after

what I have told you. But, Sara, there may be some big mistake. Miss Julia may not have taken that particular paper after all. It may turn out to be something else, and for all I know the Emperor's lost letter may have been found since I left Vienna. Suppose you just let me glance at that paper in the slipper and make sure what it is before you send it to the President. You don't want to make your father ridiculous, do you?"

Sara hesitated and then shook her head regretfully.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but in this matter I can't trust Carl Rechberg of Vienna, Austria."

"But I don't ask you to trust Carl Rechberg of Vienna," he answered, smiling. "I'm asking you to trust Charles Burton of Washington, D. C.!

"Yes," he went on hurriedly as her eyes grew round with surprise, "I'm the son of the late Major Burton, and I was born in this house. My mother took me abroad when I was a small boy and married Count Rechberg and gave me his name and reared me as an Austrian, but I have not yet forfeited my American citizenship. Do you think I would have told you all I have to-night if I wasn't through serving the so-called Holy Alliance of Europe? This mission to America was my first in behalf of that organization, and it's going to be my last. I accepted it only to please my mother and stepfather and I did all that I promised when I informed Godoy of the lost letter and the name of the woman who was believed to have taken it. I let him persuade

me to come here to your house and try to get the paper myself, but it was rather to see the house itself than for any other reason that I came. If your family had not been living in my old home, I doubt if I would ever have become your boarder."

"And the furniture interested you, too, didn't it?" Sara laughed as she recalled that day in her father's study.

"Yes, I was really surprised to discover that I owned so much handsome furniture, and there was no other reason for my examining your father's desk that day you caught me. I wasn't a bit interested in his official papers."

This revelation of Carl's real identity cleared away Sara's last doubt of him. She felt sure he had told her the truth and that she could trust him with anything that deeply concerned America. He had renounced his allegiance to the European Alliance that night.

"I'll go get that paper for you," she said, but before she could leave the room a knock sounded on the front door and there were heavy footsteps on the porch. Hattie went down the hall to open the door.

"Who can that be?" Sara whispered to Carl in vague anxiety.

As she spoke Hattie opened the door and the Spaniard and the Russian she knew so well by sight appeared under the hall light and were clearly visible from the sitting room.

"This means trouble, Sara," Carl had time to

whisper back before the men came in upon them. "We must keep our wits about us."

"Why, see!" ejaculated the giant Russian in surprise as he entered the room. "Rechberg is here!"

"We thought you had gone to the ball, Carl," Godoy remarked in equal surprise as he followed his companion.

Carl pointed to his swollen ankle propped up before him. "An accident," he explained.

"That is bad. And who—er—is this other stay-at-home, may I ask?"

"Miss Sara Moreland, who is not quite old enough for balls."

At this introduction both men bowed politely and Sara dropped a curtsy.

"You can guess why we are here, Rechberg," Godoy went on. "You have been singularly unsuccessful in doing what we expected of you, and so it seemed best to take the matter into our own hands at last. I am sorry Miss Sara is here, but if you can prevail on her to help us it will save us both trouble and time and save her the unpleasantness of having her house searched. Tell her plainly what we want, Carl."

Carl looked at Sara and his eyes said more than his lips.

"Sara, these gentlemen are anxious to recover a valuable paper which your Aunt Julia innocently appropriated from the Hofburg Palace in Vienna last spring," he begun slowly, his glance warning her to remember what he had already told her about

that paper. "It is, I think, in one of the silver slippers she gave you. This paper *must not* fall into the hands of President Monroe—you understand, Sara? It *must not* reach the President!—and so they ask you to restore it to the rightful owners. Of course your aunt would never have taken it had she known it was anything of value."

Sara curtsied to Godoy. "I will go fetch it at once," she said and ran hurriedly from the room. She heard Carl tell the men to sit down and knew that he would try to keep them there as long as he could.

In Sara's ears still rang the words Carl had emphasized. He had said this paper *must not* reach the President of the United States and what he meant to convey was that it must, since a *must not* that concerned the furtherance of the Holy Alliance was just the opposite where America's interests were at stake.

But how was the paper to reach President Monroe now? Carl had waited so long before he decided to renounce his allegiance to Austria and take his stand with his father's people that it might be too late to save this important document from the agents of the other side. Only a boy with a sprained ankle, a fat colored cook who could hardly waddle about, and a young girl were in the house to frustrate those two determined men downstairs. There were no neighbors in calling distance and even those who lived nearest the house had very probably gone in a body to the President's ball.

It was certain the men would stop at nothing to get the paper they were after, now that they had thrown all their cards on the table and come after it. If they failed now they would know they could have no other chance, and there was no one to protect her if she refused to give up what they wanted. There was not even a weapon with which she might protect herself since her father's pistols were locked up and his shotgun loaned out. Yet Carl had said quite plainly that this paper would bring some sort of disaster to the plans of the Holy Alliance in Europe if it reached the American President, and as a patriotic American how could she give it up?

Sara made up her mind as she ran up the stairs and left the unsuspecting enemies in the sitting room with Carl. She herself would take the paper to President Monroe that night through the dark roads and across the lonely commons of the uninhabited city. And she would have to go alone. Carl was crippled and Hattie was too fat to make any progress.

In her own room Sara quickly donned a cloak and bonnet and then opened her treasure box and took out the slippers her aunt had given her and removed the papers inside. As she did not know which of the two was important and which was real waste paper, she slipped both into her bodice. Stepping softly down the back stairs she avoided Hattie, who had just crossed the porch into the kitchen, and let herself out the back door. There was no light in the skies, for the night was cloudy, and ahead of

her stretched a long deserted road leading across vast commons where none but evil people would linger after nightfall. Though Washington was called a city, it was only so on paper and there was little chance that she would meet any one between her home and the neighborhood of the White House, miles away, where the ball was in full swing by now.

She knew she must hurry, for in a few moments those men would learn that she had left the house and take after her. She must keep far ahead of them and out of sight for if they saw her they might shoot to stop her progress. Feeling that she was indeed embarked upon an adventure Sara cast one glance backward at the lighted windows of her home and then began to run.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RACE THROUGH THE NIGHT

ONE important thing Sara had noticed as she left the house—there was a horse and shay tied to the hitching post near the front door and for a moment she considered getting into it and driving off in the men's own gig. But she was not a good driver and the gig was hitched directly under one of the lighted windows behind which she could clearly see Godoy, who seemed to be restlessly pacing around in the room. She knew he would be alert to every sound and that her own step on the gravel, to say nothing of the turning of the wheels, would instantly attract his attention. So she decided it was safer to trust to her feet and the chance of a long start.

She ran until she came to a grove of trees which would cut off the view of her home as soon as she had passed through, and here she paused to again look back. As she looked the front door burst open and a gigantic figure appeared in the light that streamed forth. She knew it was the Russian, but she had never realized before that even he was so big, though perhaps his shadow magnified him. Another figure joined him immediately and both were excited, to judge by the way they acted. The sound

of loud voices in angry dialogue was also borne to her on the wind. Her escape had been discovered.

"Oh, if only girls didn't have to wear petticoats!" Sara thought as she turned and began to run again. The real era of petticoats was still in the future but Sara had on enough of them to hamper her progress sadly. And her skirt, for the first time in her life, was longer than she wished it was. She was sorry she had begged her mother to let her wear them longer this year. Just two years before she had been wearing the full short skirt and long "pantaloons" which Maria Monroe had set as a fashion for little girls in America when she herself was small. That had made it easy for even girls to run.

The road was so bad that every few moments she stepped into a mud hole, but it was too dark to avoid them.

"If I had tried to drive that shay I would have overturned it in half a mile," she thought and was glad she had not attempted it.

The commons were all around her now, and there was not a sign of humanity except the desolation the axes had wrought in primeval woodland. There were paths across this wasteland and Sara thought to shorten her flight by taking one of them, so she left the road and ran out into the open common. A cold wind struck her in the breast and seemed to be trying to hold her back. Overhead the clouds lowered and she shivered at the prospect of being caught in a storm.

"I shouldn't be surprised if it snowed," she told herself. "Hattie said it would snow when she heard the fire popping to-night. A fire that pops that way always means snow, Hattie says."

Every ten steps she paused and looked back, and when she was well out on the commons she saw a light emerge from the grove of trees which she had put between herself and home. It was a lantern and it leaped along as if in the hands of a rapidly running man. She saw it was the Russian who carried it and she thought he must have a stride like the giant in Jack-and-the-Beanstalk, who wore seven-league boots. Immediately behind him came the Spaniard in the shay, who drove rapidly past the man on foot and kept straight down the road as if bound for some particular destination with no time to waste searching for little girls. She was glad to see him disappear, for she was much more afraid of him than of Kurbski.

One advantage Sara certainly had over her pursuer. He carried a lantern and she could always locate him at a glance, while he was blinded by the rays of his own light and could evidently see but a little way beyond this nimbus. If she did not fall into a ravine or over a pile of stones or lose the path she was trying to follow or be revealed by a possible flash of lightning from the sky she felt that she might lead him a pretty chase into town and never be caught.

As she hurried along with a sliding step, testing the way in the dark before she threw her body for-

ward, there came to Sara the recollection of a story her father was very fond of telling. The incident had occurred when Jefferson and Aaron Burr were candidates for President and their election was pending in Congress. Only one vote, given or withheld, would decide the question between Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Burr. Mr. Bayard from Delaware held this vote. He, with other influential and leading members, went to a ball given by a wealthy citizen, Mr. Thomas Law, in his dwelling on Greenleaf Point where he had lived since giving up a new home on Capitol Hill, which later became a boarding house. Returning late that night, the statesmen became lost on the commons. Their coachman could not find his way and drove until daybreak on the waste and broken ground where deep gullies and ravines might have caused a catastrophe that dark, rainy night. Senator Moreland had often speculated on what the loss of those Congressional votes might have brought about. Instead of Jefferson, Aaron Burr might have been President and subsequent events were to prove how disastrous that would have been for the country. And it was on just such a wild and lonely wasteland as that which had so nearly changed history that Sara was wandering to-night, with perhaps another historic event hanging on her success in reaching her destination.

Soon Sara discovered that she could never follow in the dark the path she sometimes took when going to school on a sunny morning and she turned back toward the rut road where Kurbski's lantern was

bobbing along. By keeping parallel with the light she would not lose her way and it seemed very funny that the man who was looking for her should be guiding her. But she kept far enough away to avoid the rays of his lantern and was glad of the darkness which prevented her moving figure from being outlined against the sky on that wide, open place. The Russian searched only the road and the clumps of bushes on the edge where a runaway might be hiding. He made no effort to search the broad commons and Sara supposed that he thought she would be afraid to venture far into them. But where was the Spaniard? Where had he driven in such a hurry?

A queer, creepy feeling began to assail her. She felt sure that he, too, was looking for her; that he had left his vehicle somewhere far ahead and had come stealthily back without a lantern and would grab her any moment in the blackness. His eyes would not be blinded by a light and she felt sure he could see in the darkness like a cat. Every bush she passed now took on the form of a man crouching on the earth, and every time a twig brushed her shoulder she came near to screaming she was so sure she felt his clutching fingers.

She gripped her hands into two hard fists, kept her eyes fixed on the ground at her feet, felt her way forward with the toe of her shoe, and would not let herself think of being caught. It was better to just go on as if she feared nothing except falling into a gully. In that way she might win through.

As soon as she crossed the bridge over the creek she would be in a part of the sprawling city where she could hope to meet honest citizens who would come to her if she called for help.

And then the worst thought of all occurred to her! Of course Godoy had remembered that bridge over the creek. He had driven there to head her off because he knew she could never reach the inhabited parts of the city without crossing it. The bridge was very near now and listening intently she heard the gentle neigh of a horse. Horse and shay were somewhere close by and as the bridge was only a footbridge and the ford some distance away they must be on the near side of it. Godoy had very probably left his vehicle and was waiting on the bridge in the dark to intercept her if Kurbski failed to find her along the road.

"Well, that settles it! I might just as well give myself up," Sara thought. But she had no real intention of doing so. There were clumps of thick bushes at the edge of the road near the bridge and when she had seen Kurbski come along with his lantern and throw the light among them and then join the Spaniard on the bridge she crept up into the bushes to see what they were going to do next. She could hear them talking in low voices and was glad they spoke English.

"One might as well seek a bee in a desert," Kurbski was grumbling. "In the light of day we may find her but not before."

"By daybreak her father and brothers and per-

haps many others will be searching for her," Godoy sharply rejoined. "We must find her now if we are to get the paper. She is out on these commons somewhere, for I am certain she has not crossed the bridge. Go back and seek further and keep your lantern covered part of the time. She avoids you because she sees your light."

Kurbski began to say uncomplimentary things about the desolate region he had to search. As usual, Godoy had chosen the easy part for himself. He had only to stand and guard the bridge while his fuming henchman stumbled his way over the broken ground in a tract of land which seemed to him as vast and forsaken as his native steppes in far-away Russia. To find a child in such a no man's land as that in the dark when she wouldn't answer to a call seemed impossible, and he dully resented the necessity as a personal imposition.

"Let me take the shay," he suggested. "I cannot round her up on foot."

"Dullard! Is she not on foot?" the other retorted. "And could you drive a vehicle over this broken ground without turning it over in a gully or advertising your approach with every turn of the wheels? Go back along the road, keep your lantern under your cloak, lie in wait. She must come this way, for she cannot cross the creek anywhere else."

"Perhaps she has fallen in," Kurbski observed hopefully, but immediately added, somewhat regretfully, "If she has drowned in the creek or broken

her neck in a ravine we are no nearer to getting the paper than if she goes free. Others will find her body and find the paper on her."

"True enough, so you see how important it is that we should locate her first, whether living and sound or drowned or injured. Get back and search."

Sara held her breath. Would he look into these bushes again? But it did not occur to the big man that she could have drawn so near while he talked with Godoy and he passed the clump, muttering to himself in his native tongue. He kept his lantern darkened, but a faint starlight was beginning to penetrate the clouds and Sara could see his gigantic figure outlined against the sky as he plodded back along the rough road. She could see the Spaniard, too, standing on the bridge and on the other side of the road below the bridge she knew the horse was tethered for she heard him stamp the ground and jerk the wheels of the shay.

"One thing is in my favor," Sara thought, checking the single item on her thumb; "the horse can't draw the shay across the footbridge and the ford is not so easy to find in the dark. That might give me a long start if I could get across the bridge, though there are two other things which might happen which wouldn't be so good. Godoy might chase me on foot, and he might shoot."

She watched the Spaniard closely and suddenly she discovered something else in her favor. He walked like a man with lumbago and she saw him put his hand to his back. If he had no firearm on

him—which was certainly possible, though she thought it more probable that he was armed—her chances of beating him in a foot race were excellent. And meanwhile the big Russian, whose long swift stride she could not have hoped to outdistance, was getting further and further away across the common. If she lost him for a moment in the darkness she had only to watch intently, and he was sure to flash his lantern sooner or later and then she would know where he was again. With him far away and Godoy stiff with a painful affliction and the bridge too narrow for a vehicle to pass, it looked as if she might well escape if only she could get across the creek.

She thought it over carefully as she knelt on the frozen ground behind the dry bushes so near to Godoy that she wondered why he did not hear her breathing or else just come and beat the bushes as a natural precaution. But he was stiff and sore, bodily, and probably even sorer in disposition at the moment, and his mind was occupied with disturbing ideas. He guarded the bridge carefully enough, but he made no other effort in the search for her. Perhaps he dared not. To leave the bridge for even an instant might give her a chance to cross.

But wasn't there some way that she could make him leave it for just long enough to let her dart past him? She worked her brain very hard in the hope of thinking up a plan, but it was not until her hand came in contact with a ball of yarn in her pocket that an idea popped into her head. She had wound the yarn early in the afternoon because she

had expected to spend the long evening knitting, and now here it was at her service for something. Surely she could use it in some way.

She tested its strength and thought that by doubling it she could trust it to do what she wanted. Then she tied a doubled end of it to the bush which she crouched behind and began to edge her way quietly from the vicinity of that bush, letting out the twine as she moved. It was a breathless undertaking for she was increasingly afraid of attracting Godoy's attention as she moved toward him. Crawling over the hard earth she felt the crack of a frozen twig and thought it sounded like a shot, but just at that instant the horse on the other side of the road jerked the shay around and made so many other creaking sounds in the silent night that Godoy did not know which way to look nor seemed to think it was worth looking either way. Sara pulled her skirts carefully from under her feet that she might rise quickly without stepping on them and then crouched even lower and gave the yarn a sharp pull.

The bush she had left moved suspiciously. No wind was blowing at the moment and that sharp movement in the stillness quickly attracted the Spaniard's attention. She saw him grow alert, bend his head and strain his eyes toward the bush. As she twitched the yarn again it broke off in her fingers but not before another suspicious swaying of the vegetation had given Godoy good reason to suppose there was something alive behind it. He wasted no more time but moved like a cat, swift and stealthy,

toward the place on which his suspicions were centered, and when he was some four yards from her and six from the bridge Sara sprang to her feet and ran as she had not run since an occasion long ago when Ed had chased her on horseback just for fun and nearly frightened her to death. Her feet clattered on the boards of the bridge and her wrap streamed behind her while her bonnet fell off in the mud, but she did not pause or look back.

Godoy gave vent to a violent exclamation and then a shout. He tried to take after her himself, but only a few steps showed him that he could not hope to catch the fleet-footed child in a leg race—*she* was not afflicted with lumbago!—and he called to his companion as he hurried to unhitch the horse and climb painfully into the vehicle. The ford was below the bridge and had to be approached cautiously in the dark, but the Spaniard was not in a mood for caution. He drove the horse furiously down the steep descent, the light buggy careened, a shaft snapped in two, and when Kurbski came rushing up in answer to the summoning shout of a previous moment he had first to extricate his friend from the partial wreck of his vehicle before he could take after Sara. And by that time what was the use? The girl had proved that she had both energy and wit and it was no longer a case of just outracing her. She was in a more inhabited district now and any citizen she encountered would stand by her. The two agents of the great European Alliance which so untruthfully called itself Holy realized that they

had failed in this particular undertaking and their anger rose, not against Sara, but against the boy on whom they had depended too long and trustfully to get that paper.

"Carl Rechberg was a traitor," Kurbski pronounced ponderously as he and the other man tried to bind the broken shaft together that they might get out of Washington as quickly as possible.

"I received a communication from Metternich only this morning which told me something about that boy," Godoy answered with considerable disgust in his tone. "He is a native of this very city and his name is not Rechberg nor is his blood Austrian. Had the Prince let me know that earlier I would never have trusted him so far. But it is not our fault. The 'shrewdest statesman in Europe,' as they call the Prince, has not been so shrewd after all."

Unaware that she was not being followed Sara continued to run until her breath gave out. Then she walked until she got it back and ran again. She passed only a few people and would have avoided them if she could because of her lack of a bonnet, but she was glad they were near to come at her call if she needed help.

The nearer she came to the President's house the safer she felt, for now equipages appeared and street lights were burning and only ordinary precaution was necessary. If her enemies were following her they were keeping out of view, but her fear did not

relax. Not while that paper was in her hands would she feel entirely safe.

"Where are you going, little miss?" a pleasant but surprised voice questioned as she hurried bare-headed through the November night.

"Oh, just to the house of a friend," Sara answered politely and casually but walked faster for fear the kindly gentleman would offer to escort her and learn her destination. And yet, if all Americans could not claim the house of the President as the "house of a friend" the Constitution had been written in vain.

Rounding a corner Sara saw the White House windows shining with lights.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PRESIDENT'S BALL

THE gate was open and many carriages were passing through, so that Sara darted in without being noticed. Doors also stood open and people were going in, but here she was stopped by a guard who asked for her name. Her disheveled appearance puzzled him.

"I want to see my father, Senator Moreland," she told him breathlessly. "It's very important. Will you find him for me, please?"

The explanation was sufficient, so she was passed over to another official and taken into a small deserted room, where a fire burned, and was told to wait there. Then the officer went away to the big East Room to find the Senator.

Sara put her feet on the fender to dry and sat close to the comfortable flame. She was still nervous and looked up with a start whenever any one passed the door. It was so easy to gain entrance to the President's house in this democratic country that she half feared Godoy and the big Russian would come in upon her before her father was found, and take her papers away from her and burn them. Then how would her story sound? Who would believe her? She shivered at the thought of those

men appearing and was so sure they would that her own father's entrance made her gasp and shrink farther into her chair.

The Senator had simply been told that one of his daughters was asking for him and supposing of course it was Louise or Grace, who had come with him to the ball, he entered the room with no thought of anything but a girl's headache or a torn frock. The sight of the dirty child by the fire with wind-tousled head and disheveled garments almost struck him dumb.

"Sara!" was all he could say.

"Father, take these!" she told him quickly, putting the papers into his hand. "Take them to the President. One of them is very important, but I don't know which one. Carl said that one of them was a letter that the President should see. I have been chased all the way here by two men who wanted to get it away from me."

"Sara, you astound me! Do you know what you are saying? Where did you get these papers?" her father demanded.

"They are the papers Aunt Julia took out of the wastebasket in the palace in Vienna the night she went to the court ball and got her slippers wet. She has told you about it, Father! Carl came all the way from Austria because of those papers. But he isn't Carl Rechberg at all; he's Charles Burton, and he's going to be an American and so he told me everything."

"I don't know what you are talking about, child.

but I'll show the papers to Monroe," Senator Moreland assented. "You have done a wild thing, Sara, but if it is justified I will forgive you. Stay where you are, and I will send you some refreshments."

Sara was eating an ice in her corner by the fire when in came Grace and Louise to the supposedly deserted room to repair a flounce which the younger sister had torn from her skirt. At sight of the bedraggled child in the corner they were both paralyzed by astonishment, but the next moment they were reanimated by indignation.

"Sara Moreland!" cried Grace in her most pronounced big-sister tone. "What are you doing here? How did you get here? What did you mean by coming here? And in such a state, too! Why, you look like a little darky from the wharfs."

Louise did not experience the same degree of shock as the elder sister, but she laughed without mirth and stared at Sara with astonished disapproval. And the younger girl felt decidedly uncomfortable. If the paper she had brought was not of any importance she had certainly disgraced herself for life. As long as she lived it would be told on her how she had appeared at the President's house on the night of the great ball with bedraggled skirts, face streaked with dirt, and hair all tousled and limp. And people would also tell how she had run through the cold night and deserted roads all alone on a fool's errand, just to gain attention and notoriety. She would be held up as a warning to all properly brought up little girls forevermore.

And now she began to dread her father's return and she had no answer to make to her sister's continued reproaches and amazed questions.

Then Senator Moreland came back into the room. He still looked perplexed but not disapproving, and he waved away the excited clamor of his two elder daughters.

"Sara, the President wants to see you to ask you some questions," he announced, and before the startled eyes of Grace and Louise their littlest sister was whisked off, just as she was, for an audience with the President of the United States.

As they walked down the corridor Senator Moreland told his young daughter that the President was every bit as interested in the paper she had brought as she could desire, and she need no longer fear being scolded at home.

"The whole affair is still a great puzzle to me," admitted her father, "but when you tell your story to Monroe I suppose I'll be allowed to stay and listen to it."

President James Monroe, looking very tall and elegant in a black coat and ruffled cravat, smallclothes and silk stockings, greeted Sara pleasantly when she was presented to him. There were other men in the room who also bowed to her very politely and made her feel grown up and important. She recognized Mr. John Quincy Adams and Mr. Calhoun and other members of the Cabinet. They gave her a chair beside the long mahogany table covered with green baize around which these men habitually

gathered to rule the nation, and she realized that she was in the inner room of the executive offices. Then they too sat down and listened closely as she told her story.

She told it well as her father assured her afterwards. It wasn't necessary to send for Miss Julia to explain how the papers had come into her hands, for she repeated her aunt's account of it very clearly and her father substantiated it. Then Godoy and Kurbski were described and Carl's story related at length. She would not have dwelt overlong on her trip through the night to give the papers into the President's hands, but the men insisted on the details and though some of them thought the exploit unnecessary and that the papers might have been protected in some other way they all agreed that she had shown heroism and patriotism deserving of praise.

"I hope those men haven't harmed Carl in any way," Sara said at last, feeling worried about the boy who had betrayed the schemers and whose injury left him at their mercy.

"Did they know Carl betrayed them?" her father asked.

"I don't think so. Not at first. But they may have guessed it later."

"Let us not call him Carl but by his rightful name of Charles Burton," said Monroe. "I fought side by side with his father in the Revolution, and nothing could please me more than to know that my old friend's son is back in his own land again and de-

siring to claim his rights as a native American. If he is in any danger we must send him help at once."

"I will take Sara home and see about it myself," said Senator Moreland. But to this the President would not agree.

"Miss Sara must stay here," he insisted. "There may be other questions to ask her later about these men who gave her such an adventurous evening and whose activities in Washington cannot be allowed to continue. One of my aides will go back to your house to reassure young Burton and see that all is well with him. And meanwhile one of my daughters will provide Miss Sara with another frock, and she can amuse herself at the ball for an hour or two while we consider this information she brought. But I must insist on secrecy. Let no one be told just why she is here or what happened to-night."

Both of President Monroe's daughters were now married women, and it was Mrs. Gouverneur, the youngest, whose wedding had taken place at the White House three years before, who carried Sara off to change her dress and smooth her hair, to say nothing of washing her face and hands. Sara thought this young matron as elegant as she was civil and admired so much her white satin dress and blond lace and the white plumes in her hair that she felt as if she were going upstairs with a princess. She was taken into a very luxurious bedroom in which she counted eleven armchairs and a settee and looked upon a crown-bed draped with yards and yards of cambric trimmed with red and yellow

fringe like the draperies at the windows. She washed her face at a mahogany washstand behind a screen and changed her dress for one Mrs. Gouverneur brought her.

"This is a frock I wore to a party when I was about your age," the young matron told her. "It may be a bit out of style but you will look quite nice in it, I think. And here are slippers which may fit you."

Sara descended the stairs again, feeling like the real Cinderella who had arrived late at the Prince's ball, to become the most observed person in the great gathering. Everybody was looking at her and wondering what mysterious mission had brought her there. All knew that her coming had caused the President and his Cabinet and other prominent men to withdraw from the assembly and shut themselves up to discuss something of evident importance, but that this information was to be a closely guarded secret at present was also being whispered about. Sara's mother came up to her at the foot of the stairs and after thanking Mrs. Gouverneur for her gracious attention to her little daughter drew the child's hand through her arm and said, "Sara, Sara, what does it all mean? But don't tell me if you've promised not to," she added with heroic honesty.

"Perhaps Father will tell you," Sara suggested.

"No, I have already questioned him in vain. Well, I musn't press you but all of us, your sisters in particular, are dying of curiosity."

Yes, Grace and Louise were noticing Sara as they

had never noticed her before. Their insignificant little sister had become a mysterious figure of national importance, and in their imaginations she was carrying the weight of the State upon her shoulders. And Quentin and Ed were being asked every moment by one or another of the guests if she were really their sister and if they knew what brought her there? Mrs. Moreland led her youngest daughter through the reception rooms, all of which were warmed by great fires of hickory wood behind brass andirons, and into the Oval Room, which at that time was furnished in red but was later to become the Blue Room of the White House. She was introduced to a very handsome and stately lady in black velvet, whom she already knew was Mrs. Monroe, and to her elder daughter, Mrs. Hay, and after this presentation Grace carried her off to the East Room to see the dancing.

Sara was so excited over all that had happened and the astonishing attentions she was receiving that she looked really pretty and her Aunt Julia studied her critically, thinking that in a few years Sara might easily become as handsome as her sisters. Of course she did not dance to-night—she was still just a little schoolgirl and this was a formal ball—but in every other way she had as good a time as if she were a débutante.

They sent for her only once to come back to the President's office and her father went with her. There were more men in the room this time and among them Sara recognized Mr. Madison and Mr.

Jefferson. As she came in Mr. Jefferson was speaking and his words were to linger in her memory.

"The question is the most momentous that has been offered to my contemplation since that of Independence," he was saying. "That made us a nation; this sets our compass and points the course which we are to steer. And never could we embark under circumstances more auspicious. Our first and fundamental maxim should be, never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe. Our second, never to suffer Europe to meddle in cisatlantic affairs. America, North and South, has a set of interests distinct from those of Europe, and peculiarly her own. She should therefore have a system of her own, separate and apart from those of Europe. While the last is laboring to become the domicile of despotism, our endeavor should surely be to make our hemisphere that of freedom."

Mr. Madison agreed with him and other men began to talk. Sara was not sorry to be forgotten while she listened to them because she understood exactly what they were talking about. Carl had said that the Holy Alliance of kings and emperors in Europe wanted to use their united power to overcome the weak republics of South and Central America and make kings' colonies of them again—and her father had said that Europe had begun to fear the United States as a growing power—so now it seemed to matter very much what the United States would do if the Alliance tried to overthrow the other American republics. Would the United States keep

out of the matter and let the smaller nations take care of themselves or would the Alliance find itself opposed by the big republic in the north which it did not want to fight? These statesmen were trying to decide that momentous question.

When Sara had been asked something else about Godoy and Kurbski, and especially about the emblem they wore, she was allowed to leave the room, and with courteous thanks for her services told that she might go home whenever she was tired of the ball.

"I think I'd like to go now," she said to her father as they were leaving the offices.

"And no wonder, my dear, you must be exhausted," the Senator agreed. "I will call our coach and take you at once and your mother will probably go with us. Your Aunt Julia can return with the girls in the hack if they want to stay longer."

It was really because of Carl that Sara wanted to go home. The President had said that he would send some one to make sure of his safety, but he might have forgotten. A serious anxiety filled Sara's mind as she drove home with her parents along the road which she had traveled in such different circumstances earlier in the evening. What had happened in the lonely house beyond the commons while she was enjoying herself at the ball?

The President had not forgotten to send an aide to carry reassurance to the boy who had had to stay behind while Sara was having adventures, but the young man he sent had become hopelessly lost on the commons and was riding his horse aimlessly

to and fro when the Moreland coach came along. He then followed the carriage on its way and the coachman was urged to drive at full speed.

Carl was in a highly disturbed state of mind when the coach rolled up to the door after he had waited so long for news, but it was about Sara that he was concerned. Godoy and the Russian had never returned to the house after they had put out after Sara, and Carl had not known whether they had caught her or not and he was in a fever from anxiety over her fate. But when she came hurrying in wearing a pink silk dress and with her parents and a Presidential aide accompanying her the relief was curative. That she had reached the White House was self-evident but there was much to tell on either side and they all sat talking for another hour. Now that they were at home Senator Moreland saw no reason why his wife should not be told everything since it was only at the ball that the President had not wanted the matter discussed.

"I wonder what has become of Godoy and Kurbski?" Sara speculated, feeling an amused interest in the fate of her enemies.

"I doubt if they will ever be found in the city again," said Carl. "They are probably making for the coast and will take a ship for Europe or South America."

"Well, the most surprising part of the whole matter to me, always excepting Sara's exploit, is that you are Charles Burton," said Mrs. Moreland to her youthful boarder. "To think this is your house!

Are you going to stay in America now, Carl—Charles?"

This subject also lent itself to long discussion. Before it was finished Sara was asleep in her chair with her borrowed slippers drawn up under the silk folds of her first ball gown, which would have to be sent back next day to the White House.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MONROE DOCTRINE

WHILE Sara was at breakfast next morning a note was handed her which an errand boy had just brought to the house. Receiving her mother's permission to open it at the table she read:

DEAR SARA:

Don't You ever come near me again. I will Not speak to you if you do. Go with That Other girl you like So much and leave me alone. Every day and Every night the thought of YOU makes my fever rise.

MARYBELLE.

For a moment this caused Sara a mild surprise. Then she giggled. She had noticed the capital letters scattered wildly around in the manner of that note to Carl which the two girls had decoded together, and she understood. It wasn't difficult to line up those capitals in her mind and separate them into words. In a few moments she had Marybelle's real message:

DEAR SARA:

Dying to see you.

MARYBELLE.

"Mother, may I miss my afternoon classes and go to Marybelle's house after recess to-day?" she asked Mrs. Moreland. "She's sick, you know, and as she must have heard something of what happened last night, she will be crazy to hear it all."

Receiving her mother's consent to the plan, Sara excused herself from the table and went in the living room to write an answer for the errand boy to take back with him. Sitting down at her sister Grace's elegant little desk she took up a newly made quill pen and after a little thought wrote:

DEAR MARYBELLE:

I don't care Whether you ever speak to me again or not. I don't Like you anyhow and will gladly Leave you alone. But don't think you will Ever find another such True friend Here on Earth's Rim or Elsewhere As you have found in me. That other girl you mention Never interested me Or attracted me Or won my liking before but Now she shall be my chum in your place.

SARA.

This exchange of insults must have sorely puzzled the errand boy if he were able to read the unsealed notes he carried to and fro. Perhaps he wondered if girls ever fought duels as men did at that date. But when Marybelle received the answer to her note she read it this way:

DEAR MARYBELLE:

I will be there at noon.

SARA.

She was quite happy in the prospect of seeing her chum that day.

That same morning while Sara was at school and Marybelle was waiting impatiently in her room for the recess hour that was to bring her friend to her, Senator Moreland was summoned to the White House—as the Executive Mansion had begun to be called in jest. And after a conference on a question of state, the President said to his departing guest:

"By the way, Senator, I want you to take all of your family and young Burton to the Capitol with you the day that my annual message to Congress is read this year. I believe they will be interested in what I have to say."

"Certainly, Mr. President! We will be there, every one of us, even Sara," the Senator promised.

"Even Sara?" President Monroe repeated in surprise. "Why, Sara, of course, and *even* the rest of you!"

This correction by the President amused Senator Moreland so much that he hurried home to tell his family about it. And Congressman Fulton, who had also been present at the conference and heard what was said, returned to his boarding house and repeated it to Marybelle. As Sara came in soon after the incident was related, she found her friend in raptures.

"Oh, Sara, I want to be the first to tell you what the President said this morning!" Marybelle cried as she came in. And she related the incident

dramatically. "You'll never be called Even Sara again," she prophesied triumphantly.

"I hope not," said Sara, trying to be nonchalant about it. "How are you to-day, Marybelle? I certainly wish you had been with me last night."

"I don't," said Marybelle promptly. "I wouldn't divide your glory for anything. Everybody in Washington is talking about you to-day and you are sure to be in the public eye hereafter. It's just what I wanted to happen. Some people in this house were speaking of Grace and Louise this morning and they referred to them as 'Sara Moreland's sisters' and it tickled me nearly to death."

"Don't you want to hear exactly what happened?" Sara asked, growing embarrassed by all this enthusiasm.

Marybelle nodded emphatically and Sara began the tale of all the incidents of the previous evening. There was the ghost to explain and after that Carl's story of why he came to America and who the Russian and Spaniard were and finally the revelation of his identity which was followed immediately by the unexpected arrival of Godoy and Kurbski at the house and her long race through the commons to carry the valuable paper to the White House. Marybelle hardly breathed while she talked.

"So Carl is going to take back his father's name and live in America," Sara finished. "We are all so delighted over it."

"His mother won't be if all I've heard of her is true," Marybelle laughed. "But I'm pleased just

as you are. I liked him as Carl Rechberg, and I'm sure to like him better as Charles Burton."

The girls talked through all the long gray afternoon until Sara had to leave. Marybelle's cold promised to be a long and stubborn one, but Sara said she would run in often and bring all the news there was. The "season" would soon begin as Congress was to open the following week, and to the daughters of Congressmen that was of paramount interest.

"Don't forget the President's command," was Marybelle's parting injunction. "You are to cut school and attend Congress without fail."

"If Colonel Monroe really said that we'll be there," Sara assured her.

So at noon on December 2, 1823, all the Moreland family were in the gallery above the hall of the House of Representatives where Congress was gathered for the reading of President James Monroe's seventh annual message to the representatives of the people of the American nation. Carl had come too as he was able to walk about with a cane and expected soon to be entirely recovered from his slight injury. But the most interested, if the most demure, person there was Sara, who considered herself the guest of honor of the occasion.

She looked over the balcony railing at the sea of hats below her, for every Congressman kept on his hat in those days like the members of the British Parliament, and found her father down there among the Senators. Then she felt that the country was

safe and settled comfortably into her seat to watch the other people gather or to listen to her mother's conversation with the ladies in the gallery. Carl was on one side of her and her mother on the other while on either side of them were Grace, Louise, and Miss Julia. From the row of seats above them Quentin often bent over to speak with Carl, and Ed never let his presence be forgotten.

"This is a very fine Capitol building you have," Carl said to Sara, looking around him as he had not done on the other occasion he had visited it.

"Oh, it's not mine in particular," Sara hastily disclaimed. "It belongs to everybody who claims to be an American citizen even though reared in a foreign country."

"This is a fine Capitol building *we* have," Carl amended.

"That's better."

"This room in particular," he went on, "is very handsome."

"This room is so elegant," put in Grace, "that if the acoustics were not bad the professional fault finders would have nothing at all to find fault with. Everybody says so."

Quentin took issue with this. "Fault finders can always find fault, Grace," he protested. "They can find it with the architecture of our Capitol and with the Constitution of our government when they set themselves to it. But notwithstanding that I think both are the best of their kind in the world to-day."

Quentin was a patriot.

"Now be still, children," Mrs. Moreland cautioned. "The clerk is going to read the President's message."

Sitting there in the balcony, the boys and girls heard themselves told that they, the people of the United States, were the sovereigns of their country and as such they should be informed on all public matters, especially foreign affairs. Quentin sat up straighter and folded his arms and Ed cocked his head attentively on being told that he was a sovereign. Grace didn't feel that it mattered much whether she listened or not since she was only figuratively one of the sovereign people being addressed —to be a girl in those days was like being a sort of foreigner since no girl could ever hope to vote —so she looked around at the dresses and plumed bonnets in the assembly and mused upon the discovery that skirts were certainly becoming much fuller. Louise yawned twice and thought politics amazingly dull. Sara felt her eyes growing heavy and kept them open with difficulty, but she was glad to see that Carl was taking such interest in the President's message that he was hardly breathing as he listened. She wondered why? Perhaps, coming from Austria, all this he was hearing about the people being sovereigns and free was strangely interesting to him.

The clerk's voice droned on:

"— the occasion has been judged proper for asserting as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition

which they have assumed and maintain, are not henceforth to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers."

Sara saw the Congressmen below look more alert at that statement and wondered exactly what it meant. But for several paragraphs further the message went on to say things that didn't seem quite so interesting—that the slave trade be declared piracy—the condition of finances—the post office department—the tariff—the project for the Chesapeake and Ohio canal—ardent wishes for the success of Greece in winning independence. And then:

"— With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power (in America) we have not interfered nor shall interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power, in any other light than as *the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.*"

"Did you hear that, Sara?" Carl whispered excitedly. His face had flushed while an odd expression had lighted up his eyes. And down below her Sara saw the Congressmen stir about and speak to each other. She saw her father take off his hat and run his hand over his head as he did when anything interested him intensely.

When it was all over and Congress had adjourned for the day Sara had explained to her the meaning of the significant words she had heard.

"The President was telling the Holy Alliance in Europe that if they try to bring back the rule of kings to any part of the American continents where republics now exist that the United States will join with the smaller nations to prevent it," her brother Quentin told her.

"Now you know why the agents of the Holy Alliance didn't want that paper you had to reach the President," Carl added as they slowly descended the stairs together in consideration for his injured ankle. "They were afraid that if the President learned too much about their plans, he would make just such an announcement as he made to-day."

"Then the Alliance won't do anything now?" she asked.

"I'm pretty sure that it won't. The Alliance doesn't want to have to fight the United States. So the very thing that I came to America to try to prevent has happened."

"And you helped it happen," she reminded him. "How are you going to explain that when you go back to Austria? Or are you going to stay here now?"

"I must go back," he told her. "I must explain my future course to my mother and also make my report to Prince Metternich. It would be cowardly not to tell him frankly how I carried out his mission."

Ed overheard him. "Wow! I don't envy you *that!*" he exclaimed.

"*That* I shall rather enjoy," Carl chortled.

"But suppose he puts you in prison?"

"I shall appeal to the United States minister. No, it's not telling Metternich that disturbs me but telling my mother and stepfather. I cannot doubt that they will be seriously distressed and disappointed because I choose to throw in my lot with my father's people and make my home in my native land. But this is something I must decide for myself and I have long suspected that my disposition is too democratic to allow me to submit for life to the dominance of an absolute monarchy such as exists in Austria to-day. I was born in America, and both my parents were born here. Surely my mother must understand in time that I can give allegiance to no country but the United States."

Before he departed from Washington a letter came to Carl from overseas, telling of the death of his stepfather, who was much older than his mother. The information grieved him very much, but it also lifted a weight from his shoulders.

"That will end my mother's ambitious hopes for royal favors," he told the Morelands. "As a dowager without family connections she can expect no recognition in Vienna society in future. So I daresay she will come back to America with me and perhaps in time I can even make a democrat of her."

"Let her continue to be ambitious for you, Charles," said the Senator smiling, "but instead of

visioning you as the errand boy of a monarch let her picture you as the President of a great nation. You were born here and you have as good a chance as anybody."

A week later Carl started for the coast to take ship for Europe.

"I shall not be gone long," he told his friends as he was leaving their house—which was even more his own. "As I told President Monroe yesterday when he was talking with me about my father, I am coming *home* very soon."

"If you get a cool welcome on the other side, don't let it disturb you," Sara said to him, "because the warmth of the welcome you receive when you return here will make up for it. We'll all be so glad to see you back again."

"Even Sara?" he teased her as he bowed over her hand as courteously as he had held those of her elder sisters.

"Particularly Sara," she assured him.

(1)

THE END

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